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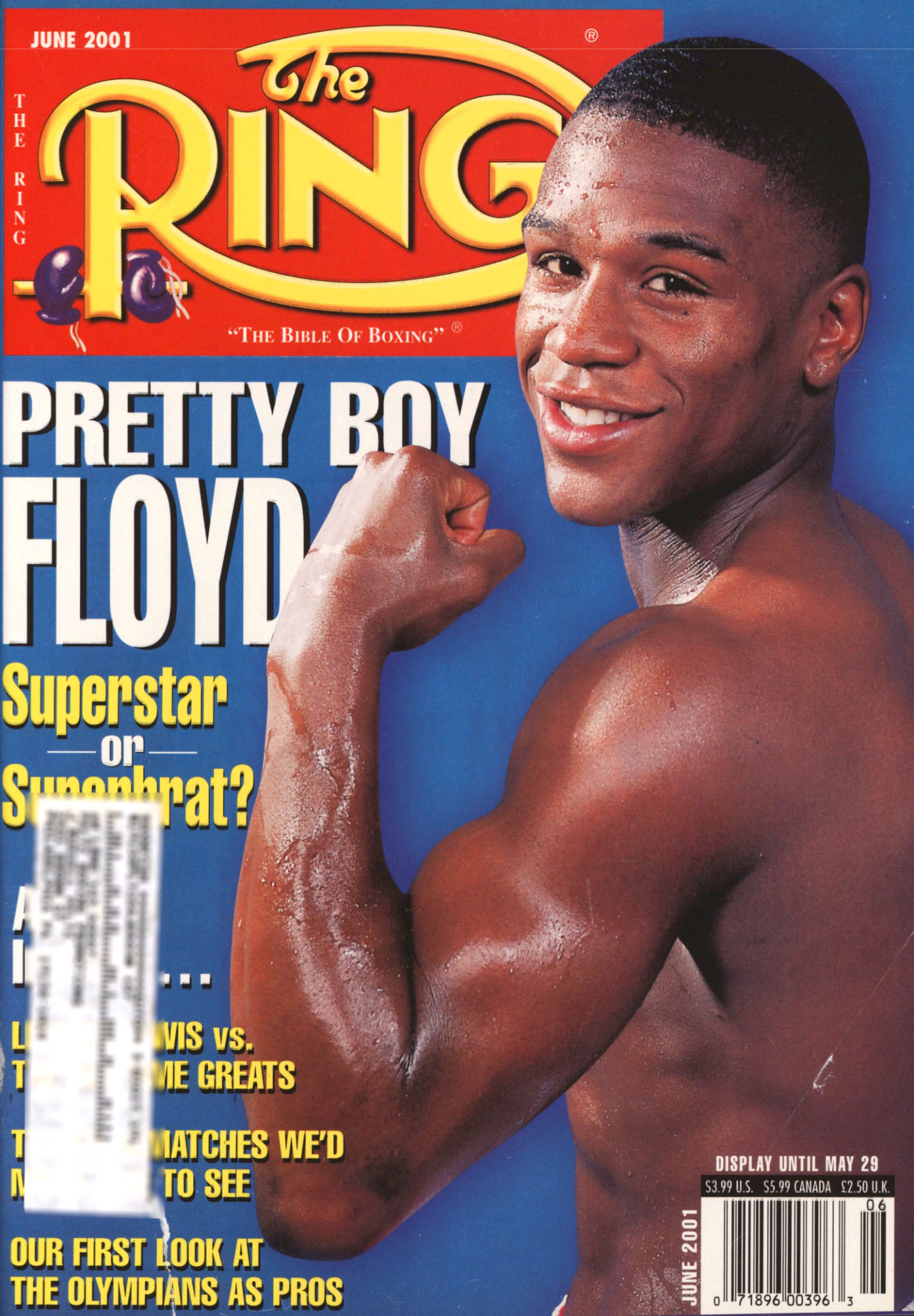

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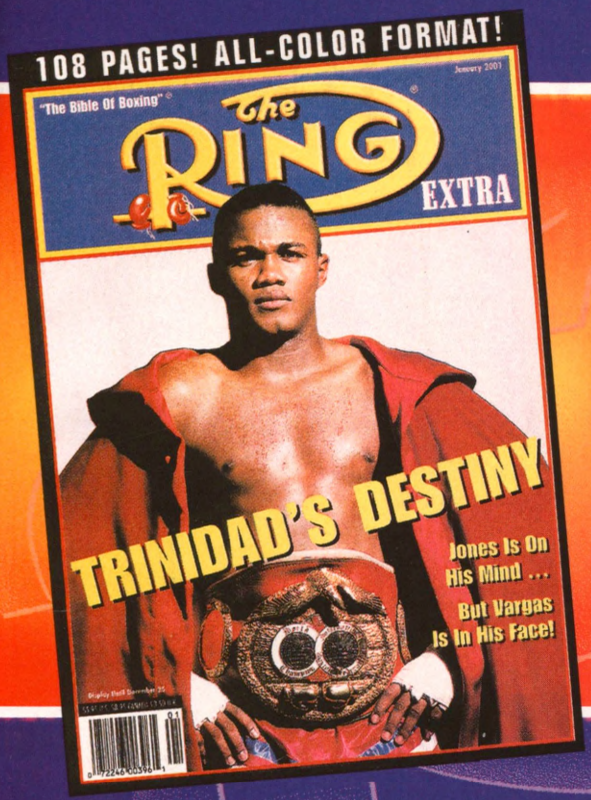

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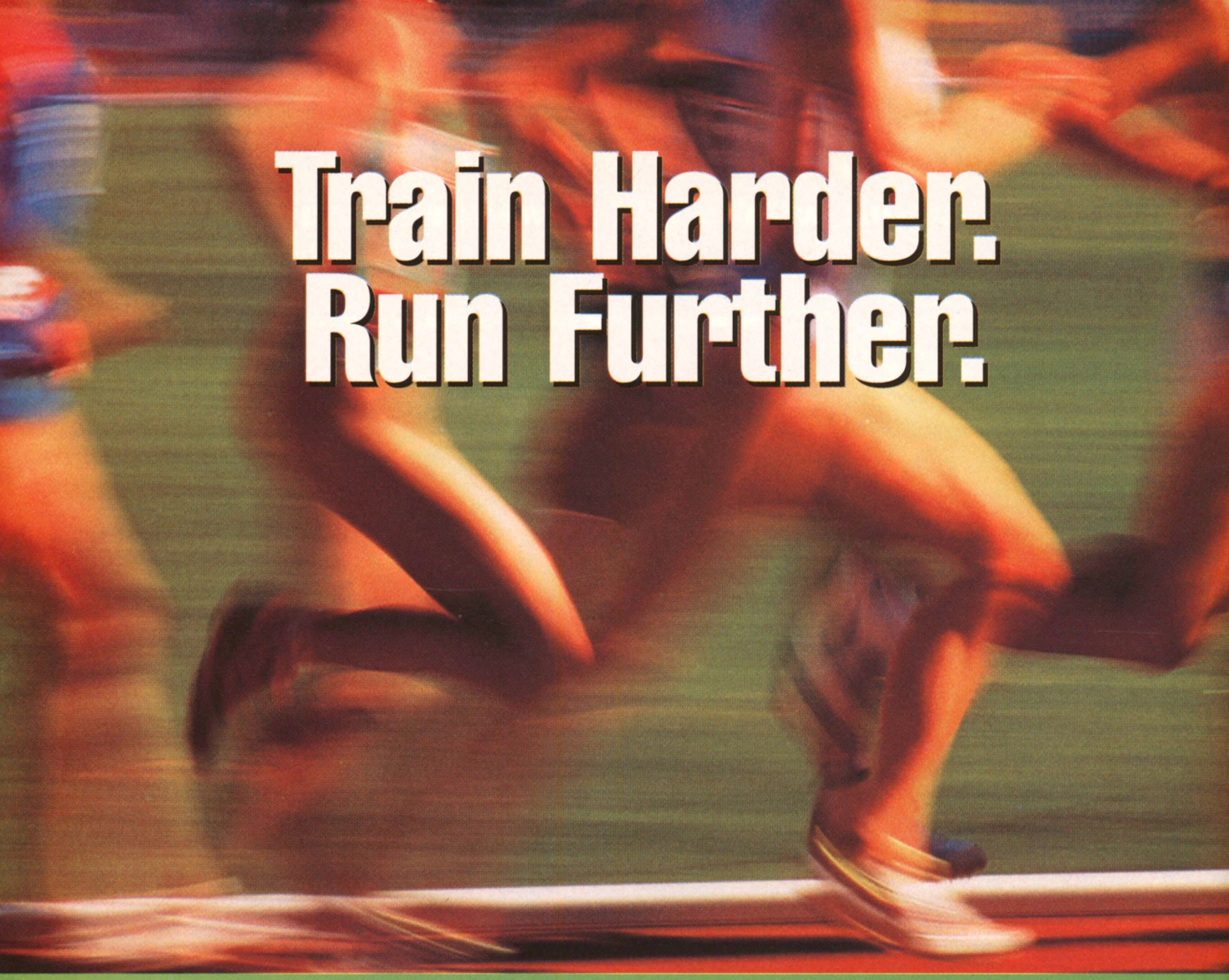

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RINGSIDE

I sure hope the suits at ABC, NBC, and CBS are paying attention to what their British counterparts are doing on the other side of the Atlantic. I'm talking about the British Broadcasting Company's decision to get back into the boxing business by signing Britain's Olympic super heavyweight champion Audley Harrison to an exclusive two-year contract. Moreover, heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis has confirmed that his April 21 defense against Hasim Rahman will be televised by the BBC.

Until now, British boxing fans, like their American cousins, had to have cable or satellite TV if they wanted to watch the Sweet Science. Boxing had been just as dead on free TV in the UK as it has been here for most of the past decade. But thanks to Lewis, Harrison, Naseem Hamed (whom the BBC is also very interested in working with), and others, the old game is thriving in the land of its birth, which has prompted the BBC to invest heavily in boxing for the first time in many years.

If the BBC's new venture is successful, it's going to change the boxing landscape in the UK. Not only will it bring boxing to a far greater audience, it will also create a much wider fan base for the really big fights, the ones that deserve to be on pay TV.

We all know what happens when there's virtually no boxing on free TV, because we've watched it happen here in the United States. The bottom line is that boxing has become a minor sport, supported by a cult following willing to pay—regardless of whether it's basic cable (ESPN2, Fox SportsNet, Univision, Telemundo), subscription cable (HBO, Showtime), or pay-per-view (SET, TVKO)—for the privilege. This is not a healthy situation for any sport, especially one saddled with as many internal problems as boxing.

We are experiencing a phenomenon now in this country, where even good fights, the matches fans have supposedly been eager to see, such as Floyd Mayweather-Diego Corrales and Kostya Tszyu-Sharmba Mitchell, die at the box office. Promoters and managers have finally broken down and allowed the best to fight the best, and still hardly anybody gives a damn. The root of this problem has many branches, but perhaps the biggest, the one that goes the deepest, is the lack of boxing on free TV.

When you think about it, the fact that boxing has survived its banishment from free TV is a testament to its enduring strength and popularity. If football, baseball, basketball, and hockey fans were required to pay for every game they watched on television, those sports might be in even worse shape than boxing.

Boxing originally came to North America from England, along with the early colonists. Over the years, the United States replaced Britain as the leading boxing nation in the world. But the Brits have been fighting back hard lately, both in the ring and in the market place. The way I figure it, when it comes to selling the sport, there's still a lot we can learn from them.

Of course, it would help if both the professional and Olympic heavyweight champions were Americans. Still, with Sugar Shane Mosley, Floyd Mayweather, Felix Trinidad, Roy Jones, Bernard Hopkins, and numerous others to work with, there's more than enough talent to get the job done. And as nice as it was to have most of the fighters from our 2000 Olympic team turn pro on HBO and Showtime, just think about how many more people would have seen them (and become interested) if they had had their first paid fights on free TV.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

Volume 80, No. 6 **June 2001**

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Marion, OH 43306-8121
(740) 375-2335

The Ring (ISSN: 0035-5410), Vol. 80, No. 6 (June 2001), is published monthly by London Publishing Co., 7002 W. Butler Pike, Ambler, PA 19002. Periodicals postage paid at Ambler, PA 19002 and additional post offices. Postmaster: Send change of address notices to: The Ring, P.O. Box 2029, Dept. 9, Marion, OH 43306-8121. Single copy price $3.99 ($5.99 in Canada, £2.50 in U.K.). Subscription price $59.64 in the U.S., $69.24 in Canada and remaining countries. Not responsible for the loss or non-return of unsolicited articles or photographs, which will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope bearing the proper amount of postage.

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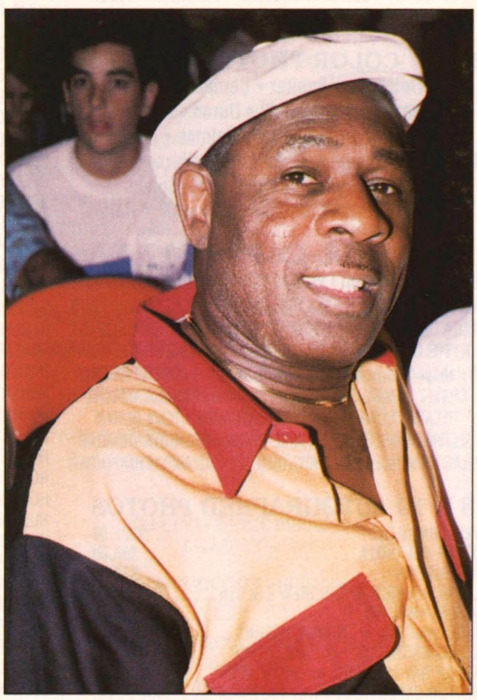
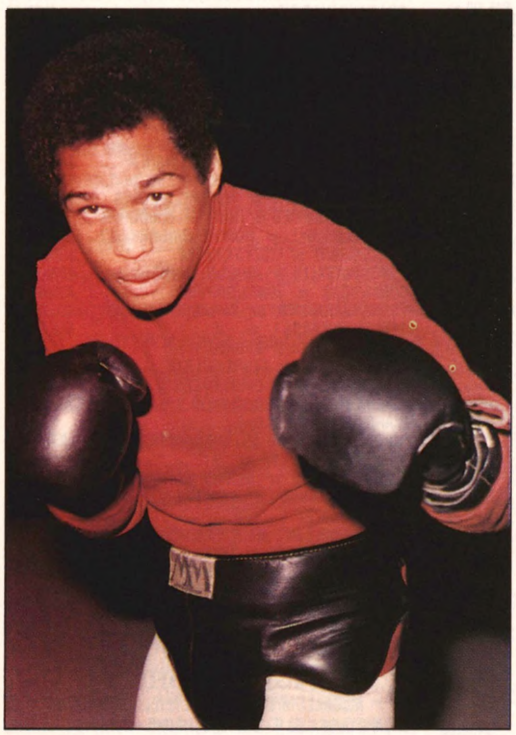
ROUND ONE

INTERNATIONAL FLAVOR TO THE CLASS OF 2001



George Benton

The International Boxing Hall of Fame's 12th class of inductees puts the emphasis on the "I" in IBHOF, as the five boxers in the Modern category hail from five different nations. Cuba, England, Hungary, Panama, and the United States are all represented in a class that may lack huge names, but still promises to enrich the home of legends in Canastota, New York.



Sugar Ramos

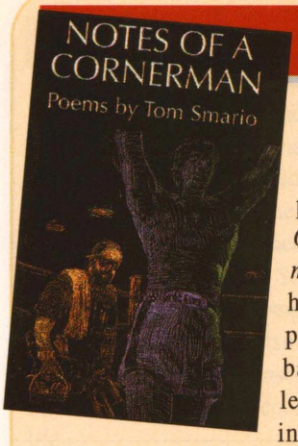
Included among those Modern honorees: Cuban **Ultiminio "Sugar" Ramos**, 55-7-4 (40), who reigned as world featherweight champion from 1963-'64; Briton **Randy Turpin**, 66-8-1 (45), who defeated Sugar Ray Robinson for the middleweight title in '51; Hungarian **Laszlo Papp**, 26-0-3 (15), who won three Olympic gold medals and reigned as European middleweight champion from '62 until ordered to retire by the Hungarian government in '65; Panamanian **Ismael Laguna**, 66-9-1 (38), who held the lightweight title in '65 and again in '70; and American **Willie Pastrano**, 63-13-8 (14), who reigned as light heavyweight king from '63-'65.

In the IBHOF's other categories, most of the 2001 inductees are American, including all four of the fighters selected in the Old-Timers category: light heavyweight champion **Paul Berlenbach**, heavyweight titlist **Jim Braddock**, middleweight champ **Billy Papke**, and flyweight king **Midget Wolgast**. English light heavyweight **Barney Aaron**, who fought in the early-1800s, is the lone inductee in the Pioneer category, while trainer **George Benton** and promoters **Don Chargin** and **Sam Ichinose** will be enshrined in the Non-Participant category. There are also three inductees in the new Observer category: journalist **Lester Bromberg**, recordkeeper and historian **Ralph Citro**, and cartoonist **Bill Gallo**.

All seven of the living inductees—Laguna, Papp, Ramos, Benton, Chargin, Citro, and Gallo—are expected to attend the June 7-10 Hall of Fame Weekend. For more information regarding Hall of Fame Weekend, contact the IBHOF at (315) 697-7095, or check out the Hall of Fame's official Web site at www.IBHOF.com.

—Eric Raskin

THE BOXING BOOKSHELF



In trainer Tom Smario's new book of poems, *Notes Of A Cornerman* (Peninhand Press, 86 pages, paperback), we at least find truth in packaging. These are notes indeed. Smario's collection of straight-forward sketches reads more like hasty ringside scrawling than a focused syntax snapshot.

Boxing and poetry can make a quality partnership, as the Sweet Science has drawn exotic linguists since the mythological epics of Homer. Frederick March created a vivid landscape of rhyme with "The Set-Up," which inspired a fine movie of the same name. The late Frank Stanford drew a wonderful backwoods tribute to Sonny Liston that highlighted a much-celebrated volume of non-sports poems. Dearly departed West Coast cult hero Charles Bukowski loved to write about the L.A. fight club scene. "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee" was inspired by one of A.J. Leibling's fanciful dispatches.

But literary professors like Harold Bloom or John Reiss could rightly criticize that Smario's little ditties don't really classify as poetry, since they appear more simply as straight narrative prose chopped into random firewood lines. Basic metaphors and similes are weak: "His jab became the tongue of a serpent," "two 38s wrapped in leather soft as magnolia petals." A good test of verse is how it sounds read aloud. And the sad fact is that there is little difference between the sound of Smario's poems and scattered excerpts from the articles in THE RING.

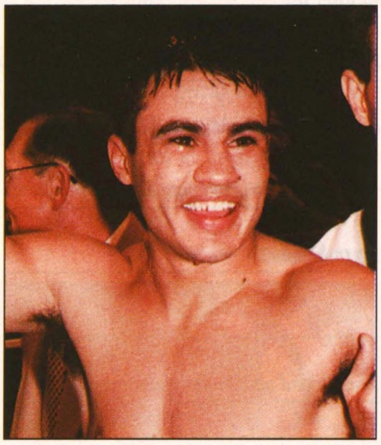
Every so often, Smario scores with a decent line. "British boxers fight like they sip tea," "on television we are all beautiful," or "referees only count to 10" help a few pages, but there are far too many ancient, sterile observations like "in the poverty of the ghettos in every major city boxers are in gyms banging away at real and imagined opponents," or "never in history does a minute go faster than in the corner of a fight for the championship of the world." Gee whiz.

Smario indicates his awareness that boxing characters speak in interesting tongues, but he usually fails to give them distinct voices. It's like watching the ring introductions, but missing the action. Smario the boxing guy knows the arena, but Smario the poet still ain't ready for the prelims. Even with his obvious background and insight, this cornerman couldn't stop the figurative bleeding.

—Phil Woolever

A MOVIE THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE

The award-winning documentary *Split Decision* (75 minutes, First Run Features) has been instrumental in helping its subject, junior lightweight contender Jesus Chavez, return to the United States. On January 14, 2001, Chavez tallied a fifth-round knockout of Benito Rodriguez in Houston, Texas, raising his record to 33-1 (23). It was Chavez' first U.S. appearance since he stopped Troy Dorsey on October 4, 1997, in Atlantic City.



Chavez: Documentary helped his cause

Chavez, a Mexican immigrant who started boxing as a boy while living with his parents in Chicago, fell afoul of the law at age 17 and spent 3½ years in prison for armed robbery. Upon his release, he was immediately deported. Shortly thereafter, Chavez reentered the U.S. illegally and turned pro in Austin, Texas.

Chavez, whose full name is Jesus Gabriel Sandoval Chavez, had been convicted as Gabriel Sandoval, but fought as Jesus "El Matador" Chavez, and went undetected by immigration authorities for several years. But when the fighter applied for a driver's license in '95, his ruse started to unravel.

Filmmaker Marcy Garriott met Chavez while he was living in Austin, became interested in his story, and documented his life on both sides of the border for the next two years.

Split Decision takes a poignant look at the inflexible U.S. immigration laws and the culture shock Chavez experienced after returning to Mexico, where he hadn't lived since he was seven. The film tells his cautionary tale in a straightforward manner, and includes fight footage and interviews with Chavez' family, various trainers (Sean Curtain, Richard Lord, Lou Duva, Nacho Beristain), and even his immigration officer. Some of the most compelling footage was shot in Mexico, and has very little to do with boxing but everything to do with the sort of man the 27-year-old Chavez has become. The soundtrack is also excellent, featuring both traditional and contemporary Mexican music.

"The documentary is only one of many positive factors that have led to Jesus being allowed to fight in the United States again," said Garriot. "He's also had a good lawyer in Barbara Hines and lots of support from people in Austin and Chicago. I've shown the film at a number of high school outreach programs, and the kids have responded very well. It brings the message to young people that, through setting goals, you can turn your life around. Jesus inspires people."

—Nigel Collins

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
1-5-01	Reggie Johnson W 12 Chris Johnson	ESPN2	lh	B-	B	C-
No one will ever accuse Reggie of being exciting, but he's still the class of the division after Roy Jones						
1-6-01	Augie Sanchez KO 4 Luisito Espinosa	Show	f	B+	B	B-
Either Espinosa has fallen a very long way, or getting flattened by Hamed turned Sanchez into a monster						
1-6-01	**Joel Casamayor KO 9 Roberto Garcia**	**Show**	**WBA jl**	**A**	**B**	**B**
What a shock: Garcia starts brilliantly and flops down the stretch						
1-7-01	Jesse James Leija KO 3 Fred Ladd	FOXSN	l	C+	D+	C+
Veteran Leija flawless in tuneup for Hector Camacho Jr.						
1-12-01	Julio Alvarez Tech. Win 7 Saul Duran	ESPN2	l	C+	B-	B
Good action fight, and does Alvarez remind anyone else of Harry Arroyo?						
1-12-01	Michael Moorer KO 2 Terrance Lewis	ESPN2	h	C+	C	C
It seemed like old times when that overhand right made Moorer do the drunk dance						
1-13-01	Panchito Bojado KO 2 Detrick Castor	Show	l	C	B-	B
We could be wrong, but when this kid hits puberty he's going to be something else						
1-13-01	Rocky Juarez W 4 Pascali Adorno	Show	f	C+	B	C
So big deal, Adorno's a lefty; from all the hubbub you'd think he had a chance of winning or something						
1-13-01	Juan Diaz W 6 Brad Jensen	Show	jw	C	B-	C+
We can't recall someone putting more into his hooks than Diaz does; how did Jensen take it?						
1-13-01	**Zab Judah KO 10 Reggie Green**	**Show**	**IBF jw**	**A**	**C+**	**D**
Brilliant, mediocre, brilliant, mediocre; make up your mind already, Zab						
1-14-01	Jesus Chavez KO 5 Benito Rodriguez	Uni	jl	B+	D+	C+
Chavez' reward for the good work he's doing now is a beating from Floyd Mayweather down the road						
1-19-01	Juan Lazcano KO 5 Vladimir Matkivsky	ESPN2	jw	B-	D	C
Another solid showing for Lazcano; Stevie Johnston may be next						
1-19-01	**Willie Jorrin W 12 Oscar Larios**	**ESPN2**	**WBC jf**	**A-**	**B**	**C+**
The way Jorrin keeps getting these decisions, you'd think his promoter had just been voted into the Hall of Fame						
1-20-01	**Jose Luis Castillo KO 6 Cesar Bazan**	**HBO**	**WBC l**	**A**	**A-**	**A-**
Stevie Johnston can rest easy knowing he's not shot after all						
1-20-01	**Floyd Mayweather KO 10 Diego Corrales**	**HBO**	**WBC jl**	**A+**	**A+**	**C+**
Bob Arum said afterward that Floyd could move to 147 and beat Oscar; the crazy thing is, he might be right						
1-26-01	J.C. Candelo KO 4 Ron Johnson	ESPN2	jm	C+	D-	D-
Johnson took fight on two days notice; next time, Ron, let the answering machine get it						
1-26-01	Teddy Reid W 10 Jesus Valverde	ESPN2	jw	C	B-	C-
If Reid would get serious about his technique, he probably could make some noise						
1-27-01	Jose Navarro W 4 Kenny Berrios	HBO	jb	C	B-	C+
Navarro no big puncher but technically solid; Berrios outclassed						
1-27-01	Clarence Vinson W 4 Adrian Valdez	HBO	b	C	B+	D
"Untouchable"? Try "Unwatchable"						
1-27-01	Jermain Taylor KO 4 Chris Walsh	HBO	m	C	B	C+
Taylor outclasses 22-fight pro; it's a shame he'll probably end up a super middleweight						
1-27-01	Ricardo Williams KO 4 Anthony Simpkins	HBO	jw	C+	B	C+
Williams is good, but can he punch? Simpkins took about 30 shots flush and we're still waiting for him to blink						
1-27-01	Michael Bennett KO 1 Andrew Hutchinson	HBO	h	C	B-	B-
What was Arthur Mercante Jr. waiting for? The post mortem?						
1-28-01	Martin Castillo KO 7 Omar Adorno	Uni	jb	C-	C+	C
Down in second, Adorno absorbs beating for five more rounds and surrenders on stool						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox SportsNet; Uni—Univision; Tel—Telemundo

MEDICAL MIRACLE

As we went to press, Paul Ingle was continuing a remarkable recovery at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital in Sheffield, England, after having undergone a successful operation to remove a blood clot from his brain. He suffered the injury during his second defense of the IBF featherweight title, against South African Mbulelo Botile on December 16 at the Sheffield Arena.

The 28-year-old from Scarborough was knocked out in the 12th and final round by the former IBF bantamweight titleholder *(see page 58 for more details on the fight)*, and within minutes, ringside paramedics were battling to save his life as he slipped deep into a sinister unconsciousness. Within an hour, he was being operated upon, and the swiftness and excellence of the medical care he received unquestionably saved his life.

"Ironically, being knocked out probably saved him," revealed his trainer, Steve Pollard. "If he hadn't been, he might have gone home after a brief examination which may not have seen the extent of his injuries detected. Had he left that arena with the bleeding already started, he would have been dead the next day. That's the opinion of one of the top neurological surgeons in this country."

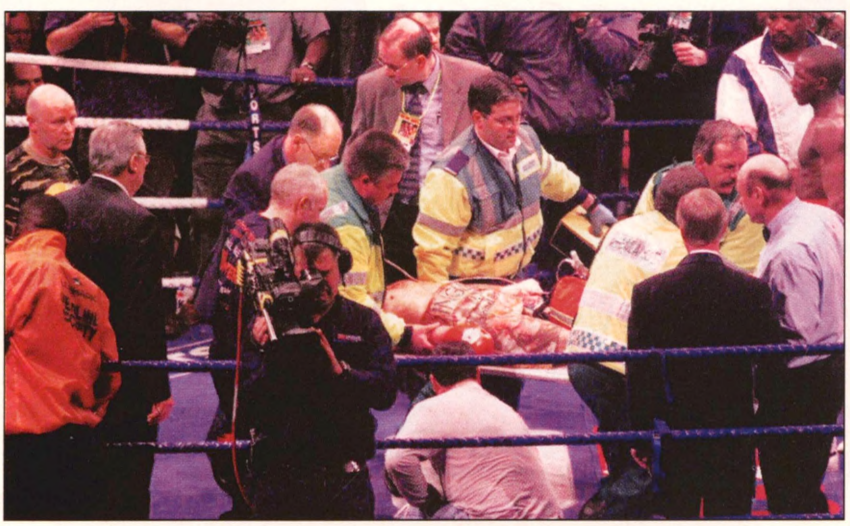
Robert Battersby was the consultant neurosurgeon who operated on Ingle, and he delivered this conclusion having reviewed the tape of the fight. Others attached blame to the corner for allowing Ingle out for the final round after being felled in the 11th by a left hook, the same punch that was violently and almost catastrophically repeated in the 12th.

"If I knew what was going to happen I would never have sent him back out," declared Frank Maloney, who managed Ingle from the start of his career. "I'd have stopped the fight in the 10th round. I'd have called it off last week. I have to live with what happened."

Thankfully, Ingle will be able to do the same. He had begun to talk again in mid-January and was starting to walk, too. He was even reported to have proposed to his girlfriend, Samantha, who was sick with worry before the signs of his improved condition became joyously real.

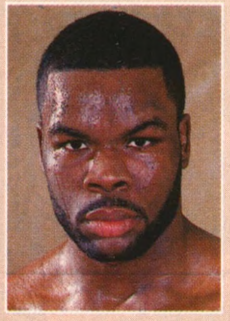
Four days after the fateful fight, Michael Watson, seriously injured in a 1991 bout against Chris Eubank, emerged victorious from the Court of Appeal in London after the British Boxing Board of Control had its appeal against damages of £1-million to be paid to Watson thrown out. The improved medical facilities at ringside in Britain, as a direct result of the consequences of the Eubank-Watson fight, are responsible for Ingle being alive today.

—Brian Doogan



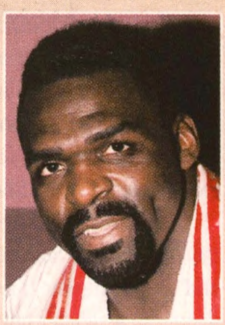
Ingle's situation looked bleak as he was stretchered off

OUTSIDE THE ROPES



Grant: Blood clots kayo comeback

Mike Tyson has been enveloped in controversy regarding his use of prescription drugs over the past year or so, but now his alleged use of non-prescription drugs is getting him in further hot water. After refusing a urine test before his October 20 fight with **Andrew Golota** and, according to a complaint filed by the Michigan Athletic Board of Control, testing positive for marijuana after the fight, Tyson was slapped with $205,000 in fines and a 90-day suspension in mid-January. The suspension is meaningless, however, because Tyson reportedly had no plans to fight until after those 90 days are up … The road to **Oscar De La Hoya's** comeback was more or less cleared in mid-January when a U.S. District Court Judge issued a summary judgment in "The Golden Boy's" favor in his attempt to free himself from his contract with promoter **Bob Arum**. Arum is expected to appeal the ruling. In less pleasing legal news for De La Hoya, **Shanna Moakler**, the spurned mother of the fighter's infant daughter, announced in late-December that she is suing De La Hoya for $62.5-million, half of his earnings during the time they lived together … Heavyweight contender **Michael Grant** underwent surgery in early-January for blood clots that had developed in his back and below his shoulder while he was training for his scheduled January 13 comeback fight. Manager **Craig Hamilton** said he expects Grant to be ready to fight again in June … Legendary three-time Olympic gold medalist **Felix Savon** of Cuba announced his retirement from amateur boxing in mid-January. Savon is looking to make the transition to coaching … Shortly after wrapping up a three-month jail term for dealing drugs, former WBA heavyweight champion **Tony Tubbs** was accused by his probation officer of testing positive for cocaine. If found guilty, Tubbs could serve another nine months … Sadly, there are quite a few deaths to report this month. The most stunning is that of **Bekzat Sattarkhanov**, the 20-year-old who just won the featherweight gold medal at the 2000 Olympics for Kazakhstan. Sattarkhanov, who won a controversial decision over American **Rocky Juarez** in the finals, was killed in a New Year's Eve car crash in his homeland. Two others in the car survived … **Sahasombhop Srisomvongse**, described by Asian correspondent **Joe Koizumi** as "the most influential promoter in Thailand," died of a heart attack in late-December at the age of 62. Sahasombhop was also the president of Asian Boxing Council (ABC) … Veteran Las Vegas judge **Al Siciliano** died of lung cancer in early-January at the age of 70. As a boxer, Siciliano won the Golden Gloves in Washington, D.C., in 1951 … **Flossie Holmes**, the mother of former heavyweight king **Larry Holmes**, died in early-January of an aneurysm. She was 78 … **Joseph Tshabalala**, a journeyman South African light heavyweight in the '80s and '90s, died in a bizarre forklift accident in early-January. He was 38 … Los Angeles-based trainer and former middleweight contender **Ray Barnes** died of lung cancer in mid-December at the age of 71. Barnes' most noteworthy fight was a 10-round decision loss in a non-title bout against then-champion **Sugar Ray Robinson** in 1950.



Tubbs: In trouble again

THE PUNCHLINES

"I don't know, maybe he was eating cookies when he was supposed to be listening to his law professor."

—Don King, on rival promoter and Harvard law grad Bob Arum's defeat in the courtroom to Oscar De La Hoya

"Hey, I'm not Jeff Van Gundy."

—Bob Arum, explaining why there wouldn't be a staredown between temperamental rivals Floyd Mayweather and Diego Corrales at the final prefight press conference

AL KRATZER'S VIEW

The RING
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

(For period ended February 4, 2000)

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **SHANE MOSLEY** Welterweight
2. **FELIX TRINIDAD** Junior Middleweight
3. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER** Junior Lightweight
4. **ROY JONES** Light Heavyweight
5. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Welterweight
6. **NASEEM HAMED** Featherweight
7. **LENNOX LEWIS** Heavyweight
8. **BERNARD HOPKINS** Middleweight
9. **ERIK MORALES** Featherweight
10. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA** Junior Featherweight

HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: Carl Thompson (seventh last issue) switches places with Arthur Williams (sixth last issue) due to the fact that Thompson has been busier.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: David Telesco (fifth last issue) departs because he hasn't fought in more than a year. Previously unranked Julio Gonzalez is aboard at the seventh position following his victory over heretofore unbeaten Julian Letterlough.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Andrew Council (seventh last issue) is dropped for inactivity, making room for Antonio Perugino to debut at number 10.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: WBC champ Francisco Castillejo advances from fifth to fourth, trading spots with Ike Quartey, who hasn't fought since April 2000. J.C. Candelo replaces Shibata Flores in the 10th position, thanks to Candelo's recent form and busy schedule.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: Reggie Green (10th last issue) exits following his knockout loss to Zab Judah. He's replaced by Ben Tackie.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Cesar Bazan tumbles from fifth to ninth following his kayo loss to Jose Luis Castillo. Bazan's demotion results in Angel Manfredy, Artur Grigorian, Colin Dunne, and Jesse James Leija all moving up one place each.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Floyd Mayweather (second last issue) takes over the top spot by stopping Diego Corrales (first last issue), who falls to fourth. Corrales' degrade pushes up Joel Casamayor (third last issue) and Acelino Freitas (formerly fourth) one position each. Streaking Jesus Chavez jumps from eighth to sixth, while Roberto Garcia (10th last issue) is gone following his kayo loss to Casamayor. Replacing Garcia is veteran contender John Brown.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Jorge Eliecer Julio (sixth last issue) exits because he hasn't fought since January 8, 2000, pushing up Jorge Lacierva, Ricardo Barajas, Mauricio Martinez, and Cuauhtemoc Gomez one place each to sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth, respectively. Genaro Garcia is now aboard at number 10.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Saman Sorjaturong (sixth last issue) leaves following his kayo loss to Yosam Choi (currently second). Sorjaturong's departure lifts Melchor Cob-Castro, Will Grigsby, Jorge Arce, and Hidenobu Honda one spot each. Fahlan Sakkreerin enters in the 10th position.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No changes.

POUND-FOR-POUND: Thanks to his near-flawless performance against Corrales, Mayweather leaps from seventh to third, causing Roy Jones (formerly third) and Oscar De La Hoya (previously fourth) to both slide down a spot. Corrales, who was fifth last issue, comes out altogether, making room for Lennox Lewis to advance from eighth to seventh, for Bernard Hopkins to climb from to 10th to eighth, and for Marco Antonio Barrera to re-enter the list at number 10. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended February 4, 2001

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

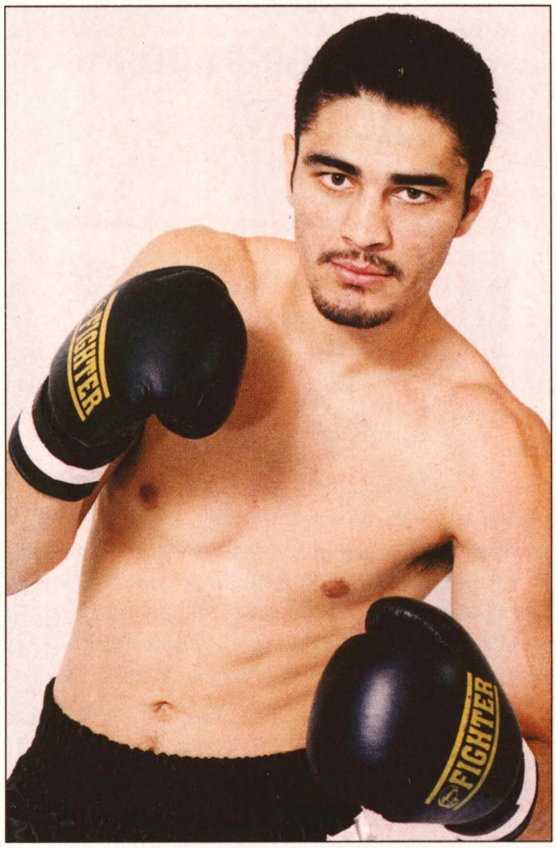
In each division, fighters are ranked according to their abilities and accomplishments.

Being champion does not necessarily mean a fighter will be rated at the top of his weight class.

These ratings reflect how the best fighters in the world rate against one another.

Ratings By The Editors

Records By Fight Fax Inc.



Unbeaten light heavyweight Julio Gonzalez debuts at number seven

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

1. **LENNOX LEWIS** England 38-1-1 (WBC/IBF Champ)
2. **MIKE TYSON** Catskill, NY 49-3
3. **KIRK JOHNSON** Canada 30-0-1
4. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD** Fairburn, GA 37-4-1 (WBA Champ)
5. **DAVID TUA** New Zealand 37-2
6. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 35-1
7. **OLEG MASKAEV** Staten Island, NY 20-3
8. **MICHAEL GRANT** Norristown, PA 31-1
9. **HASIM RAHMAN** Baltimore, MD 34-2
10. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI 32-2

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

1. **FELIX TRINIDAD** Puerto Rico 39-0 (WBA/IBF Champ)
2. **FERNANDO VARGAS** Oxnard, CA 20-1
3. **WINKY WRIGHT** St. Petersburg, FL 41-3
4. **FRANCISCO CASTILLEJO** Spain 51-4 (WBC Champ)
5. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 34-2-1
6. **HARRY SIMON** Namibia 20-0
7. **BRONCO McKART** Monroe, MI 42-3
8. **YORY BOY CAMPAS** Mexico 76-4
9. **TONY MARSHALL** Albany, NY 34-8-6
10. **J.C. CANDELO** Denver, CO 22-3-3

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

1. **NASEEM HAMED** England 35-0
2. **ERIK MORALES** Mexico 39-0
3. **MBULELO BOTILE** South Africa 27-1 (IBF Champ)
4. **DERRICK GAINER** Pensacola, FL 34-5 (WBA Champ)
5. **GUTY ESPADAS** Mexico 33-2 (WBC Champ)
6. **JOHNNY TAPIA** Albuquerque, NM 48-2-2
7. **FRED NORWOOD** St. Louis, MO 37-1-1
8. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 33-2
9. **MANUEL MEDINA** Mexico 58-11
10. **ISTVAN KOVACS** Germany 20-0

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

1. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA** Mexico 52-3
2. **BONES ADAMS** Henderson, KY 40-3-3 (WBA Champ)
3. **LEHLO LEDWABA** South Africa 31-1-1 (IBF Champ)
4. **WILLIE JORRIN** Sacramento, CA 28-0 (WBC Champ)
5. **NESTOR GARZA** Mexico 38-2
6. **ENRIQUE SANCHEZ** Mexico 28-1-1
7. **MANNY PACQUAIO** Philippines 29-2
8. **ANTONIO CERMENO** Venezuela 38-3
9. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico 38-3-1
10. **MICHAEL BRODIE** England 30-1

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

1. **PAULIE AYALA** Ft. Worth, TX 31-1 (WBA Champ)
2. **TIM AUSTIN** Cincinnati, OH 21-0-1 (IBF Champ)
3. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 28-1 (WBC Champ)
4. **JOHNNY BREDAHL** Denmark 48-2
5. **ADAN VARGAS** Mexico 35-2-1
6. **JORGE LACIERVA** Mexico 18-3-3
7. **RICARDO BARAJAS** Mexico 21-1-1
8. **MAURICIO MARTINEZ** Panama 19-3-1
9. **CUAUHTEMOC GOMEZ** Mexico 48-8
10. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 23-3

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

1. **JUAN CARLOS GOMEZ**
   Germany *32-0 (WBC Champ)*
2. **VIRGIL HILL**
   Bismarck, ND *46-3 (WBA Champ)*
3. **VASSILIY JIROV**
   Kazakhstan *26-0 (IBF Champ)*
4. **JOHNNY NELSON**
   England *39-12-1*
5. **MARCELO DOMINGUEZ**
   Argentina *30-3-1*
6. **CARL THOMPSON**
   England *28-5*
7. **ARTHUR WILLIAMS**
   Pensacola, FL *33-5-1*
8. **JAMES TONEY**
   Las Vegas, NV *60-4-2*
9. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
   France *42-2*
10. **LOUIS AZILLE**
    Jersey City, NJ *15-0-2*

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight limit: 175 pounds

1. **ROY JONES**
   Pensacola, FL *43-1 (WBC/WBA/IBF Champ)*
2. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI**
   Germany *43-0*
3. **ERIC HARDING**
   Philadephia, PA *19-1-1*
4. **REGGIE JOHNSON**
   Houston, TX *41-6-1*
5. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
   Chicago, IL *39-3*
6. **CHRIS JOHNSON**
   Canada *26-2-1*
7. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
   Huntington Beach, CA *26-0*
8. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL *16-1*
9. **GREG WRIGHT**
   Bronx, NY *18-6-2*
10. **DERRICK HARMON**
    Chicago, IL *20-1*

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

1. **SVEN OTTKE**
   Germany *21-0 (IBF Champ)*
2. **JOE CALZAGHE**
   Wales *30-0*
3. **BRUNO GIRARD**
   France *38-2-1 (WBA Champ)*
4. **CHARLES BREWER**
   Philadelphia, PA *36-7*
5. **THOMAS TATE**
   Houston, TX *38-6*
6. **DAVEY HILTON**
   Canada *39-2-3 (WBC Champ)*
7. **DINGAAN THOBELA**
   South Africa *40-8-2*
8. **GLENN CATLEY**
   England *26-4*
9. **BYRON MITCHELL**
   Ozark, AL *22-1-1*
10. **JAMES BUTLER**
    Bronx, NY *17-1*

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Philadelphia, PA *38-2-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **WILLIAM JOPPY**
   Washington, D.C. *32-1-1 (WBA Champ)*
3. **KEITH HOLMES**
   Washington, D.C. *35-2 (WBC Champ)*
4. **ARMAND KRAJNC**
   Sweden *24-0*
5. **ANTWUN ECHOLS**
   Davenport, IA *24-4-1*
6. **HASSINE CHERIFI**
   France *31-4-1*
7. **SYD VANDERPOOL**
   Canada *28-2*
8. **CARL DANIELS**
   St. Louis, MO *47-3-1*
9. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
   England *30-0*
10. **ANTONIO PERUGINO**
    Italy *16-0*

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA *36-0 (WBC Champ)*
2. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Whittier, CA *32-2*
3. **VERNON FORREST**
   Atlanta, GA *31-0*
4. **OBA CARR**
   Detroit, MI *52-3-1*
5. **WILFREDO RIVERA**
   Puerto Rico *32-4-1*
6. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
   Denmark *22-0*
7. **SHANNAN TAYLOR**
   Australia *28-0-1*
8. **ANDREW LEWIS**
   Guyana *20-0-1*
9. **DERRELL COLEY**
   Capitol Heights, MD *34-2-2*
10. **KOFI JANTUAH**
    Ghana *20-0*

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

1. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
   Australia *26-1-1 (WBA/WBC Champ)*
2. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY *26-0 (IBF Champ)*
3. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
   Washington, D.C. *47-3*
4. **ANTONIO DIAZ**
   Coachella, CA *33-3*
5. **ENER JULIO**
   Colombia *21-3*
6. **RANDALL BAILEY**
   Miami, FL *23-1*
7. **TERRONN MILLETT**
   St. Louis, MO *22-2-1*
8. **MICKY WARD**
   Lowell, MA *35-10*
9. **JOHN-JOHN MOLINA**
   Puerto Rico *52-6*
10. **BEN TACKIE**
    Ghana *21-2*

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
   Mexico *42-4-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Denver, CO *30-2-1*
3. **PAUL SPADAFORA**
   Pittsburgh, PA *32-0 (IBF Champ)*
4. **TAKANORI HATAKEYAMA**
   Japan *24-1-2 (WBA Champ)*
5. **ANGEL MANFREDY**
   Gary, IN *35-5-1*
6. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN**
   Uzbekistan *31-0*
7. **COLIN DUNNE**
   England *32-1*
8. **JESSE JAMES LEIJA**
   San Antonio, TX *42-5-2*
9. **CESAR BAZAN**
   Mexico *38-4-1*
10. **GILBERTO SERRANO**
    Venezuela *20-5-1*

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Grand Rapids, MI *25-0 (WBC Champ)*
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
   Miami, FL *24-0 (WBA Champ)*
3. **ACELINO FREITAS**
   Brazil *29-0*
4. **DIEGO CORRALES**
   Sacramento, CA *33-1*
5. **STEVE FORBES**
   Las Vegas, NV *19-1 (IBF Champ)*
6. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Mexico *33-1*
7. **JONGKWON BAEK**
   South Korea *22-1-1*
8. **LAKVA SIM**
   Mongolia *12-2-1*
9. **YONG SOO CHOI**
   South Korea *27-3-1*
10. **JOHN BROWN**
    Atlantic City, NJ *22-8*

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

1. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
   North Korea *23-2-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **LEO GAMEZ**
   Venezuela *33-7-1 (WBA Champ)*
3. **FELIX MACHADO**
   Venezuela *20-3-1 (IBF Champ)*
4. **IN JOO CHO**
   South Korea *18-1*
5. **GERRY PENALOSA**
   Philippines *42-3-2*
6. **JESUS ROJAS**
   Venezuela *33-8-3*
7. **HIDEKI TODAKA**
   Japan *17-3-1*
8. **YOKTHAI SITHOAR**
   Thailand *22-1-1*
9. **SAMSON TOYOTA-THAILAND**
   Thailand *38-0*
10. **ADONIS RIVAS**
    Nicaragua *16-1-1*

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

1. **ERIC MOREL**
   Madison, WI *28-0 (WBA Champ)*
2. **IRENE PACHECO**
   Colombia *25-0 (IBF Champ)*
3. **MALCOLM TUNACAO**
   Philippines *11-0-1 (WBC Champ)*
4. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
   South Africa *18-1*
5. **CHATCHAI DUTCHBOY GYM**
   Thailand *37-2*
6. **MEDGOEN TOYOTA-THAILAND**
   Thailand *20-1*
7. **SAEN SOR PLOENCHIT**
   Thailand *38-1*
8. **ALEJANDRO MONTIEL**
   Mexico *44-3*
9. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
   Mexico *20-0-1*
10. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
    Venezuela *15-0*

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

1. **RICARDO LOPEZ**
   Mexico *49-0-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **YOSAM CHOI**
   South Korea *23-1 (WBC Champ)*
3. **PICHIT C. SIRIWAT**
   Thailand *22-1*
4. **BEBIS MENDOZA**
   Colombia *27-0 (WBA Champ)*
5. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
   Nicaragua *27-2-1*
6. **MELCHOR COB-CASTRO**
   Mexico *59-6-4*
7. **WILL GRIGSBY**
   St. Paul, MN *15-2-1*
8. **JORGE ARCE**
   Mexico *26-3-1*
9. **HIDENOBU HONDA**
   Japan *22-1*
10. **FAHLAN SAKKREERIN**
    Thailand *42-2-2*

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

1. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
   Mexico *25-1-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **KEITARO HOSHINO**
   Japan *21-6 (WBA Champ)*
3. **JOMA GAMBOA**
   Philippines *29-5-1*
4. **NOEL ARAMBULET**
   Venezuela *12-2-1*
5. **CHANA PORPAOIN**
   Thailand *41-1-2*
6. **WANDEE SINGWANGCHA**
   Thailand *25-4*
7. **SONGKRAM PORPAOIN**
   Thailand *20-2-1*
8. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
   Columbia *32-2*
9. **JOSE GARCIA**
   Colombia *22-5-1*
10. **DANIEL REYES**
    Colombia *24-0*

CAMERA CLICKS

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Who better to kick off the new year than the man known as "The Greatest"? Muhammad Ali and his wife, Lonnie, were on hand in Times Square to make the ball drop as part of the annual celebration hosted by Dick Clark (who, incidentally, is believed to have turned 2001 this year as well).

PHOTO BY RAY BAILEY

Ladies and gentlemen, the latest hit-makers on the pop music scene, Murad and the Has-Beens! Larry Holmes, Murad Muhammad, and Tim Witherspoon are currently touring the country, performing such smash singles as "Nursing-Home Rock," "That's Not A Slow-Motion Replay, It Only Looks Like It," and "Don't Worry, I Fight Better Than I Sing (But Not By Much)."

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

As the 30th anniversary of the first Muhammad Ali-Joe Frazier bout neared, legendary referee Arthur Mercante Sr. was presented this Leroy Neiman painting by Mohegan Sun Vice President of Sports and Entertainment Paul Munick. Moments later, Mercante continued to watch paint dry, in the form of IBF junior welter champ Zab Judah's snoozer with Reggie Green.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

And here we see Neiman hard at work on the piece he'll be presenting to Arthur Mercante Jr. in 30 years.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

In this photo, we see the best and worst things about KO Nation. *The best, of course, would be the* KO Nation *Dancers. The worst, however, is that damned rapper Memphis Bleek blocking our view of one of the Dancers.*

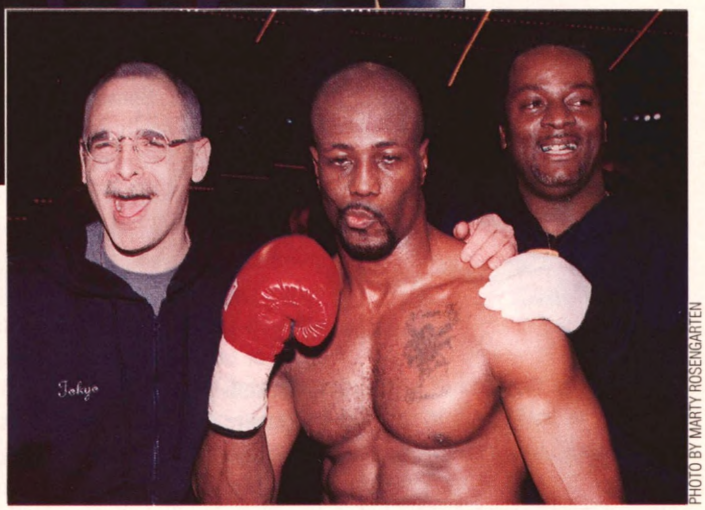


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Our best guess here is that U.S. Olympian Michael Bennett was trying to make the face opponent Andrew Hutchinson made after Bennett's right hand connected midway through the first round of his pro debut. That's manager Arnie Rosenthal and cornerman Jerry Clark enjoying Bennett's impression.

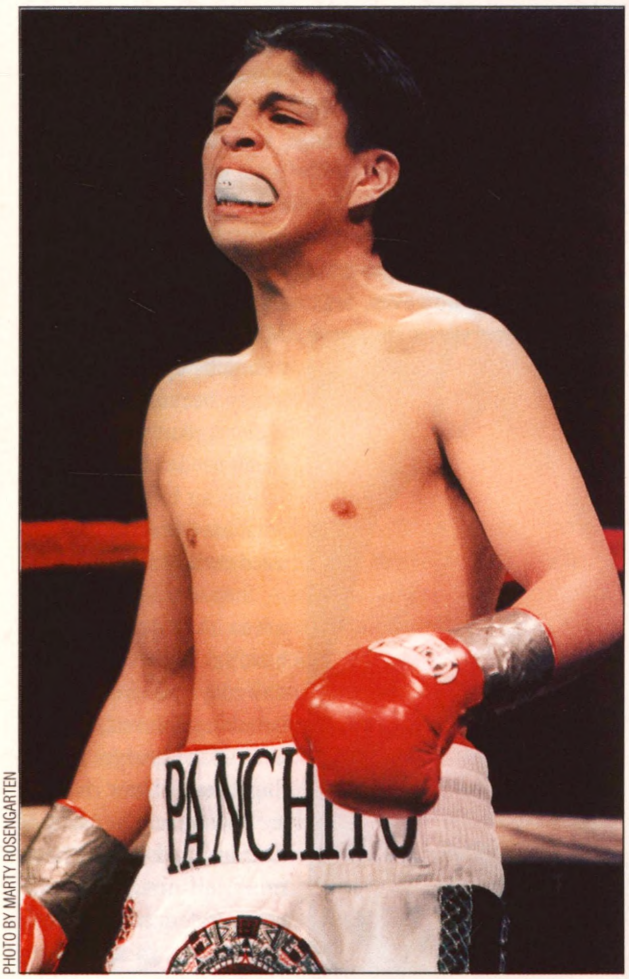


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

By the look on his face, you'd think Francisco "Panchito" Bojado was a little kid trying to choke down a mouthful of brussel sprouts. Too bad for his opponent in his pro debut that Bojado only looks like a little kid, because he fought like a man while forcing Detrick Castor to choke down several mouthfuls of leather.

NOSTALGIA CORNER

So much for that thou-shalt-not-covet commandment. Late-'50s welterweight champs Virgil Akins and Don Jordan both seemed to like each other's belts more than their own, forcing Ring *editor Nat Fleischer to tell them that they had to behave or else he would take both belts away.*

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

THE GRUDGE REPORT

Tom Hanks once told us that there's no crying in baseball, and as we were reminded in the weeks leading to the Floyd Mayweather-Diego Corrales showdown, there's no holding one's tongue in boxing. By fight night, a guy has usually unburdened himself to so many microphones and notepads that the only thing he has to worry about getting off his chest is his opponent's head. Sometimes the verbal attacks on the enemy are just prefight hype. Other times, though, the animosity is real. And it's at those vividly venomous moments that some of us truly give thanks that we're not covering golf or the Iditarod.

Let's hear it for boxing, the last bastion of incivility in sports. The place where grudge matches still exist and political correctness is about as welcome as a Fan Man landing. The forum for big mouths, pot-stirrers, and a cast of incendiary characters who can always be counted on to talk before they think. As was demonstrated prior to Mayweather's demolition of Corrales, no topic is off-limits when it comes to twisting the knife in the other guy. Not even accusations of spousal abuse or father-son estrangement. And if that strikes you as regrettable, well, then the pro bowlers tour awaits your patronage.

If there is anything to regret about Mayweather-Corrales, it's that the intense dislike the fighters had for each other manifested itself only in the fury and focus of the "Pretty Boy." In most cases, bouts dripping with bad blood usually provide wild exchanges and shifting momentum. The only place an outgunned Corrales was able to land, however, was on the floor. Nonetheless, Mayweather-Corrales gets a thumbs up from me precisely because of its prefight ugliness. It was a much-needed breath of poisonous air blowing through what have become the sanitized corridors of sport.

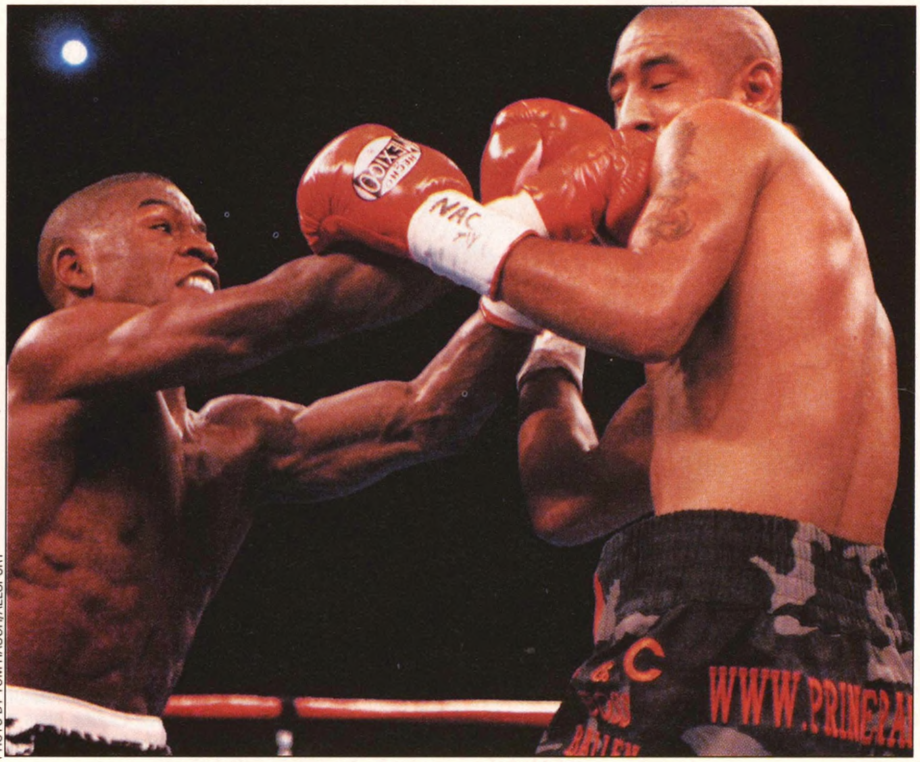


PHOTO BY TOM HAUCH/ALLSPORT

Mayweather-Corrales: Politically incorrect

Step into any stadium or arena that doesn't have boxing on its marquee nowadays and you'll soon be asking yourself, "Where have all the grudges gone?" Supposedly bitter rivalries are now merely figments of the fans' and broadcasters' imaginations. At some point, fraternization among opponents in the team sports became acceptable. How ridiculous is it? Well, when the New York Yankees and Seattle Mariners engaged in an unusually

vicious brawl during a 1999 game, two players didn't get involved in the fray. Yankee superstar Derek Jeter and his buddy, Mariner sensation Alex Rodriguez, instead stood on the fringes of the action, smiling and talking to each other.

Attend an NBA game and you'll see that when the players take the court for the opening tip-off, what was once a quick handshake between rivals has become a hug-a-thon straight out of *Oprah*. Even teams that are *supposed* to hate each other don't. When the Yankees and Mets squared off in the World Series, the pregame quotes on both sides were about as inflammatory as an ice cube. Not even Roger Clemens throwing a broken bat at Mike Piazza could get the rhetoric cranked up to the level of your average Bernard Hopkins-Antwun Echols fight.

Today, paranoid front offices and control-freak coaches make sure that none of their players say anything boastful, disrespectful, or provocative for fear that the other team will use it as "bulletin-board material" and get even more psyched up. (Right, Coach, it's not playing in the Super Bowl on national TV that will have the enemy frothing, it's your backup placekicker's prediction that you'll cover the spread.) Remember Joe Namath's once-in-a-lifetime "guarantee" of victory in Super Bowl III? You'll routinely hear assurances like that from most boxing champions. As a matter of fact, you'll routinely hear guarantees of victory from most pugs fighting four-rounders. Fighters provide not just the bulletin board material for their opponents, but the yellow highlighting pen and the thumbtacks, too.

The really sad thing is that even those few guys who played other sports but always seemed to have a boxer's mentality have been exposed in recent years. When Wilt Chamberlain died, we learned that he and arch-rival Bill Russell actually had dinner together the night before some of their big showdowns. (Do you think Willie Pep and Sandy Saddler did that?) Tennis' Jimmy Connors, who liked to compare the U.S. Open Finals to a heavyweight championship bout and once said after losing to Bjorn Borg at Wimbledon, "I'll follow the son of a bitch to the ends of the earth," now pals around with once-hated enemies like Borg, John McEnroe, and Guillermo Vilas on the seniors tour. Try to imagine Marvin Hagler hanging out with Sugar Ray Leonard and Thomas Hearns.

Grudge matches are to boxing as air is to a balloon. You show me two guys who hate each other, and I'll show you a previous engagement canceled and a date circled in my *TV Guide* in red pen. Heck, is there *any* reason in the world a third Mike Tyson-Evander Holyfield bout is even periodically mentioned, except for the fact that the ear-biting incident turned the rivalry particularly nasty? Would a Christy Martin-Lucia Rijker fight be the biggest women's matchup in history because of their blend of skills? Or because Rijker once sucker-punched Martin and Martin called Rijker "a punk"?

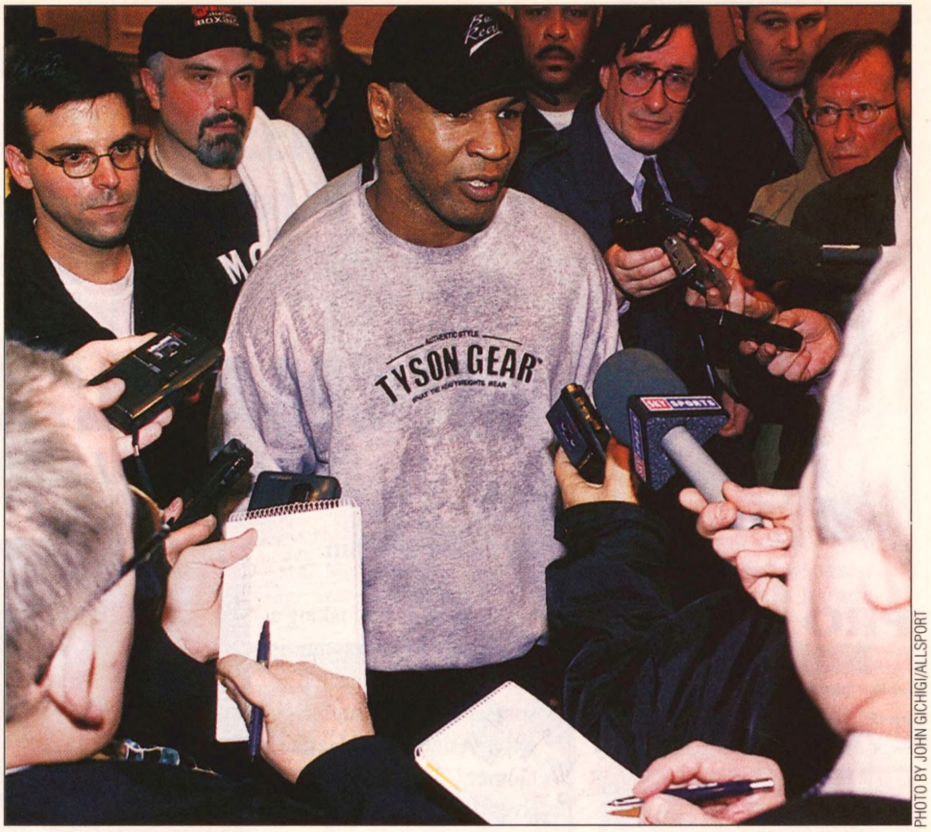


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/ALLSPORT

When Tyson talks trash, the media eats it up

Doesn't Tyson-Lennox Lewis have a lot more juice now that Tyson has talked about eating the champion's children and has convinced everyone that the matchup will be bathed in ill will by the time the bell sounds? Say what you want about Tyson and, yes, his diatribe following the kayo of Lou Savarese certainly was rubber-room material. But it at least informed potential pay-per-view buyers that "Leg-Iron" Mike isn't planning on sitting down with Lewis for tea and crumpets.

Johnny Tapia and Danny Romero have shown us that a grudge doesn't have to last forever, while Smokin' Joe Frazier has given indications that some of them just might. But as sad and unfortunate as that latter situation may be, it at least reveals how deeply passions run in this game. To me, grudges will always be a good thing because they get some fights made that otherwise might not be. They create interest and headlines and remind the mainstream that the sport still has a pulse. And they add another chapter to boxing's rich collection of wild antics and quotes.

Boxers ain't archers, folks. They don't just walk the walk, they also talk the talk. (Greg Haugen once had the stones to talk it with full knowledge that he'd have about 130,000 Julio Cesar Chavez fans in Mexico City calling for his scalp when he entered the ring.) Think about it: One line you almost never hear in boxing is, "Oh yeah, well, he wouldn't say that to my face." That's because he probably already has said it to your face. Two or three or four times. Rest assured that if someone in the fight game doesn't like you, you'll be the first to know. ■

NEW FACES

MICHAEL GOMEZ

Junior Lightweight

By Brian Doogan

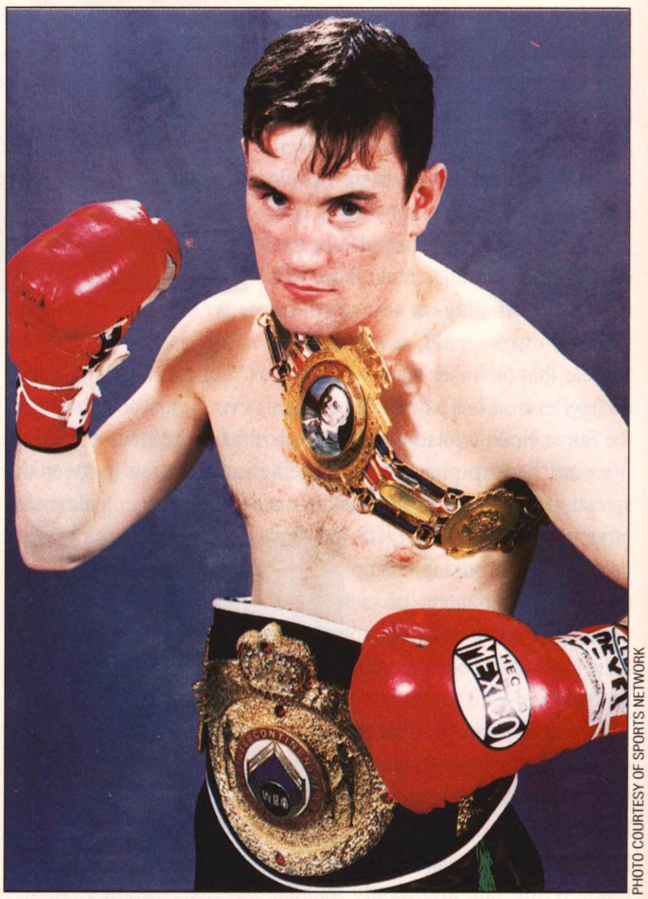


PHOTO COURTESY OF SPORTS NETWORK

The trauma of taking a punch on the chin is nothing compared to some of the excruciating experiences in Michael Gomez' 23-year-old life. Even the circumstances of his birth can be summarily described as harsh.

"I was born in the back seat of a car in Langford," said the British super featherweight champion. It was an inauspicious beginning for a man promoter Frank Warren believes is one of the best talents today in British boxing.

"Some people claim they came into the world with a bang. My claim is that I came into the world in a banger [British slang for an old car]."

Gomez' natural sense of humor has survived a succession of harrowing events that might have left those of weaker character with serious psychological problems.

While being brought up in Dublin and long before he changed his last name from Armstrong to Gomez (in homage to the brilliant Puerto Rican Wilfredo Gomez, a three-division world champion and perhaps the finest junior feather ever), his 18-month-old sister died.

"We couldn't afford a proper cot, so we put her in a kind of box with strings tied across the top to keep her in," Gomez recalled. "One of the strings came undone, and unfortunately she died that way. I took it very badly and had to see a psychiatrist to get over it.

"I've not had the upbringing most people have had. I never saw all my sisters. I never went to school. Shoplifting, robbing was what I became involved in, but to survive.

"I came to England at age nine and I was put in a care home in Manchester. For six years that was my home. I met my girlfriend there. She taught me how to read and write when I was 15.

"Football [soccer] used to be my game. I

(Continued on page 63)

PRO RECORD

1995		
June 10	Danny Ruegg, Manchester, England	W 6
Sept. 15	Greg Upton, Mansfield, England	L 4
Nov. 24	Danny Ruegg, Manchester	L 4
1996		
Sept. 19	Martin Evans, Manchester	KO 1
Nov. 9	David Morris, Manchester	W 4
1997		
March 22	John Farrell, Wythenshawe, England	KO 2
May 3	Chris Williams, Manchester	L 4
Sept. 11	Wayne Jones, Widnes, England	KO 2
1998		
April 18	Benny Jones, Manchester	W 4
May 16	Craig Spacie, Bethnal Green, England	KO 3
Sept. 5	Peter Buckley, Telford, England	W 6
Nov. 14	David Jeffrey, Chestnut, England	KO 1
Dec. 19	Kevin Sheil, Liverpool, England	KO 4
1999		
Feb. 13	David Hind, Newcastle, England	W 6
Feb. 27	Chris Jickells, Oldham, England	KO 5
May 29	Nigel Leake, Halifax, England	KO 2
Aug. 7	William Alverzo, Atlantic City	W 6
Sept. 4	Gary Thornhill, Bethnal Green	KO 2
Nov. 6	Jose Juan Manjarrez, Widnes	W 12
Dec. 11	Oscar Galindo, Liverpool	KO 11
2000		
Jan. 29	Chris Jickells, Manchester	KO 4
Feb. 29	Dean Pithie, Widnes	W 12
June 24	Carl Allen, Glasgow, Scotland	KO 2
July 8	Carl Greaves, Widnes	KO 2
Oct. 20	Awel Abdulai, Philadelphia	W 8
Dec. 11	Ian McLeod, Widnes	W 12

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
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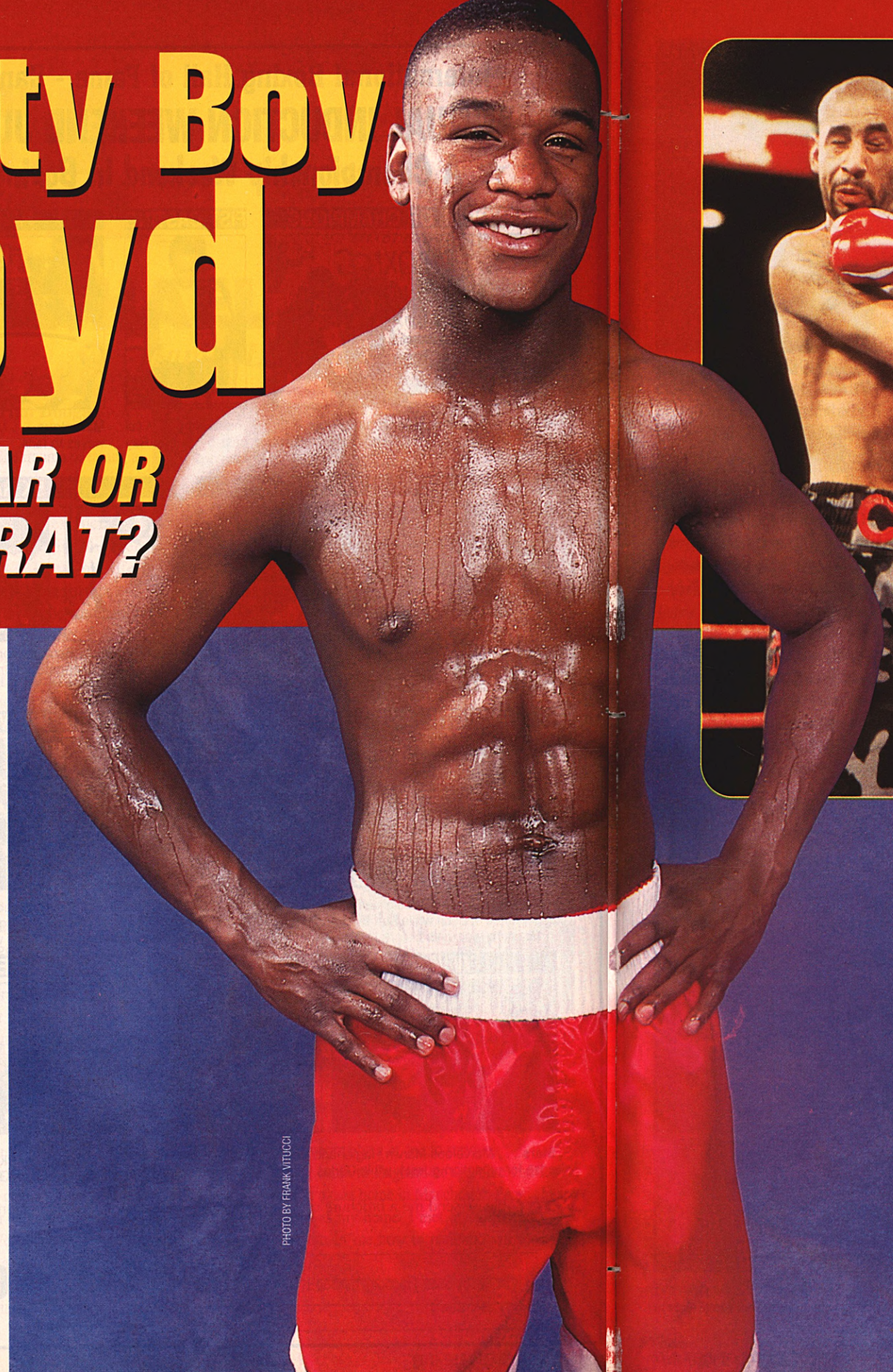
Pretty Boy Floyd

SUPERSTAR OR SUPERBRAT?



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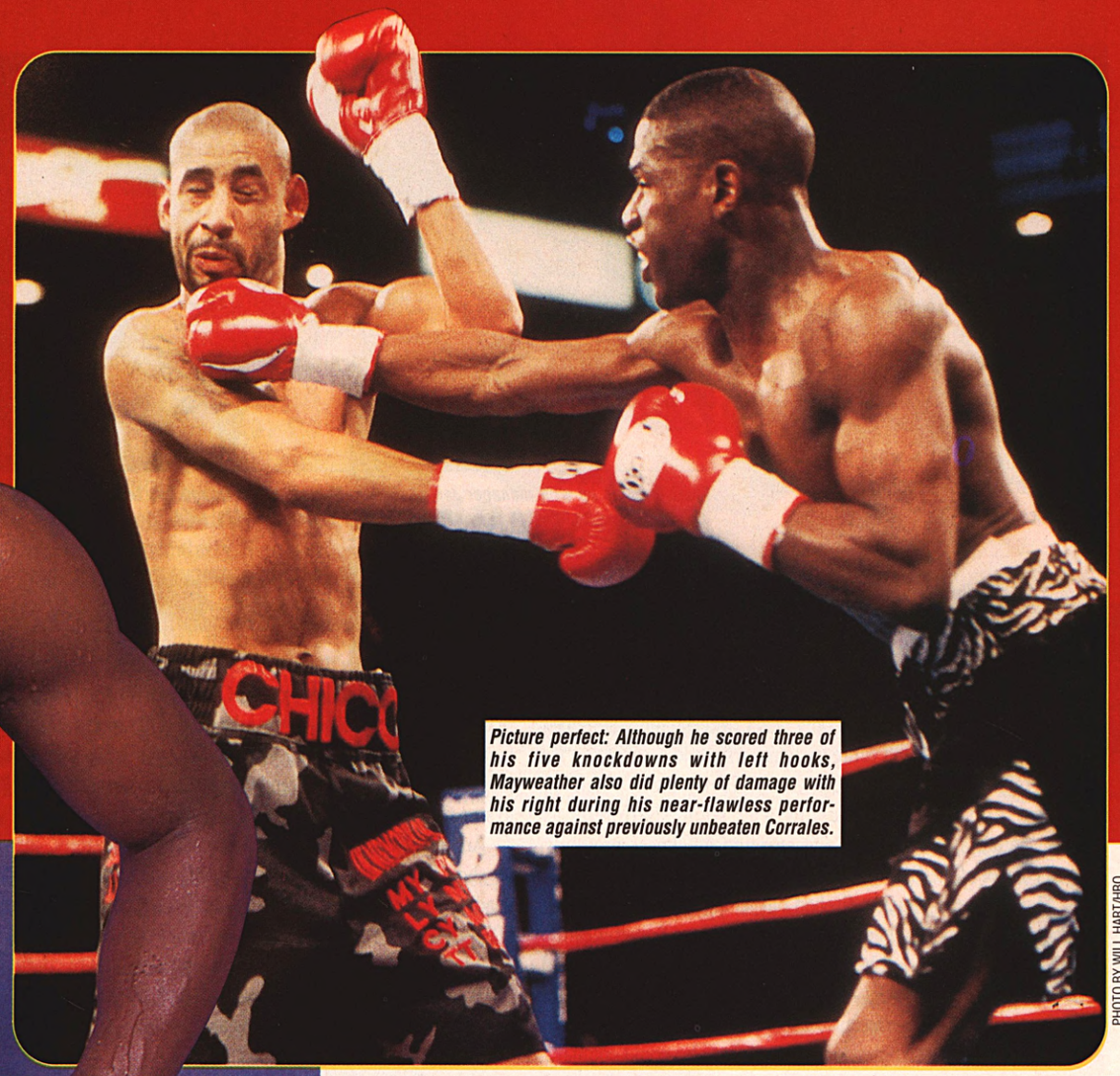

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Picture perfect: Although he scored three of his five knockdowns with left hooks, Mayweather also did plenty of damage with his right during his near-flawless performance against previously unbeaten Corrales.

By Nigel Collins

Watching Floyd Mayweather dissect Diego Corrales, you knew you were witnessing an artist at work, a master craftsman as deft with his fists and feet as Michelangelo was with a paintbrush and chisel. But "Pretty Boy Floyd" has yet to arouse the mass adulation befitting his extraordinary ability. Today, more than ever, a fighter's story line is just as important as his ring record, and Mayweather has been sending out so many mixed signals, people simply can't decide whether he's a superstar or a superbrat.

The conflicting sides of the WBC super featherweight champion's nature were as conspicuous before and after his showdown with Corrales as his spellbinding skills were during the fight itself.

Even before the match was signed, Mayweather began mouthing off about the spousal abuse charges Corrales faced in connection with the beating of his pregnant wife. Corrales fired back by reminding everybody of how Mayweather had evicted his own father from the house he'd bought him. They traded insults through the media and taunted each other at press conferences.

Things became even nastier as the fight approached. Promoter Bob Arum had to wedge himself between the bickering pair at a Los Angeles media event to prevent them from trading blows prematurely, and there was also a parking lot confrontation between entourages. The ugliness reached its apex when Mayweather's manager, James Prince, invited Corrales' wife, Maria, to sit ringside to see her husband take the kind of punishment the fighter allegedly gave her. Thankfully, she had the good taste to decline the offer.

The tone changed the moment referee Richard Steele stopped the fight, and Mayweather's sunny side bubbled to the surface. He shared a prolonged, emotional embrace with his father, Floyd Sr., and consoled a distraught Corrales. It was heart-warming stuff, the complete antithesis of Mayweather's antagonistic prefight demeanor.

So what are we to make of this remarkable young man who seems to be such a contradictory tangle of sweet and sour? Is he the bright-eyed prodigy who won THE RING's 1998 Fighter of the Year award in only his second full season as a professional, or the ungrateful malcontent who scorned a $12.5-million offer from HBO by calling it a "slave contract"? Or is he all of the above, a complex young man struggling to come to terms with exactly who he is and who he wants to be?

The paradoxical complexion of Mayweather's personality make him a marketing dilemma. Like its comical cousin professional wrestling, boxing is, albeit to a lesser degree, a morality play, where good guys and bad guys are pitted against one another. But because boxers are real peo-

ple, as opposed to actor/athletes playing a role, the line of demarcation is fuzzier in boxing, which frequently makes it far more difficult to package the product. Still, the sport's biggest stars have usually been fighters whose personae have clearly defined them as either heroes (Joe Louis, Ray Leonard, Shane Mosley) or heels (Jake LaMotta, Sonny Liston, Mike Tyson).

Muhammad Ali is one of the few fighters who went from a villain in the eyes of many to a hero in the minds of most. The majority of fighters find their niche and stay there, and that's what Mayweather must do in order to develop into the superstar he deserves to be.

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

Since hooking up with manager James Prince, Mayweather's image has taken a hit. Prince drew the ire of many by tastelessly offering a ringside seat to Corrales' wife.

MAYWEATHER'S MASTERPIECE

Despite the fact that they are both 23 years old, when Corrales and Mayweather answered the opening bell, it looked like a man against a boy. Not only was Corrales taller and bulkier, his shaved head and scraggly whiskers made him appear far more menacing than the fresh-faced "Pretty Boy" bouncing toward him. But the illusion was soon shattered, as Mayweather's classic skills and amazing quickness promptly took control of the fight.

Mayweather's punches flashed out so quickly, it was almost impossible to follow them with the human eye. Sometimes the only way you could tell he'd connected was that Corrales' head suddenly snapped back. At first, the defending WBC super featherweight champ was fairly conservative, landing crisp, single shots, and then stepping back before Corrales could counter.

Corrales, probably drained by weight-making difficulties, landed an occasional punch, but for the most part failed to let his hands go. Incrementally, round after round, punch after punch, Mayweather wore his man down, until the time was ripe to end the surprisingly one-sided affair.

Even though Uncle Roger, the two-division former champ, had replaced Mayweather's father as trainer, there had been a reconciliation before the fight, and Papa Floyd yelled instructions from his ringside seat. Between the sixth and seventh, Roger urged his nephew to put the finishing touches to his masterpiece, and Pretty Boy responded by flooring Corrales three times in the seventh. The round was barely underway when a left hook dropped him the first time. A double left hook—first to the body, then to the head—was responsible for the second decking, and a flurry, punctuated with a right, sent Corrales sprawling yet again near the end of the round. Corrales, his face bruised and lumpy, was on his feet when the bell rang, but it only delayed the inevitable.

Corrales, who entered the ring weighing 146 pounds after needing two trips to the scales to make 130 at the official weigh-in the day before, landed a hard hook of his own in the eighth that made Mayweather smile in acknowledgement. But "Chico" had precious little left by that point, and after additional softening up in the ninth, Mayweather floored Corrales with another left hook in the 10th. And when a right corkscrewed Corrales to the canvas for a fifth knockdown, Ray Woods, Corrales' trainer and stepfather, climbed on the apron and told referee Richard Steele (USA) to stop the fight, which he immediately did at the 2:19 mark.

An angry Corrales, 33-1 (27), complained bitterly, insisting he should have been allowed to continue. Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed. According to CompuBox, Corrales only landed 60 punches, compared to 205 for Mayweather, and it would have been dangerous to allow such a lopsided bout to continue.

"I used my defense the way my dad wanted me to," said Mayweather, 25-0 (19). "I just wanted to show who is the best in the world."

Corrales earned a reported $1.4-million, to Mayweather's $1.7-million, but the big prize was the six-fight, $15-million contract with HBO that went to the winner.

Promoter: Top Rank

Television: HBO

(1-20-01)

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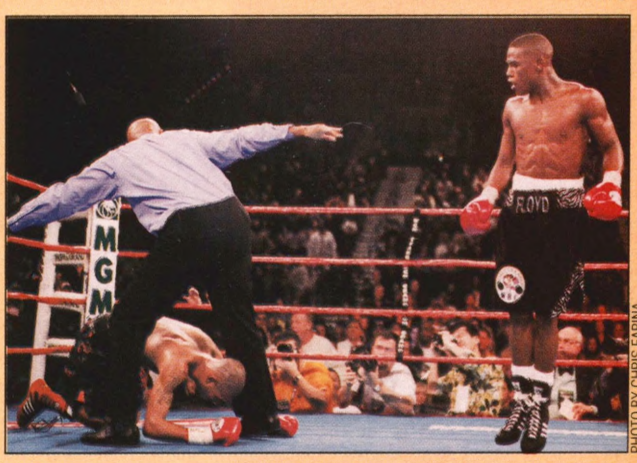

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Corrales crashes for the third time in the seventh

Afterward, Mayweather claimed that all the venom he spewed prior to the fight was just hype.

"What I said was only to sell some tickets," Mayweather told Corrales. "Let all that trash-talking we did, let that be in the past. Let's get on with our careers."

Whether or not all the acrimony put any additional backsides into the seats at the MGM Grand Garden or improved the TV rating is difficult to ascertain with any certainty, but the fight definitely wasn't the blockbuster it deserved to be. The announced crowd of 8,126 wasn't even half-capacity, and HBO's rating share was only 7.3 (approximately 1.9 million viewers). That's not particularly high for *Championship Boxing*, the network's top boxing program, especially when you consider that *Boxing After Dark*, the network's lower-budget, late-night boxing program, averages a 7.4 rating.

"All the bad blood was a very calculated thing," said HBO boxing analyst Larry Merchant. "It probably had to do with James Prince, and Floyd echoed that himself when he said, 'Controversy sells.' Whether it sells with a guy who fights like him, I don't know. His style in the ring belies that.

"I think that part of the whole thing before the fight was that he felt threatened. A lot of people were picking Corrales; it was 6-5 in the betting propositions. Corrales had stepped into the space he'd left open and taken the headlines. I think that unnerved Floyd and the people around him, but I don't think that's his natural chemistry."

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

No, Corrales isn't trying to butt Mayweather in the groin, he's just ducking extra low to avoid the left hook that bedeviled him the entire fight. To the surprise of many, "Chico" was totally outclassed.

Mayweather is certainly ill-suited for the gangsta role. Tyson looks like a thug. The 23-year-old Pretty Boy, with his baby face and what Merchant termed "naturally effervescent quality," could still pass for the high school prom king. It would be smarter if he played to his strengths instead of pretending to be a trash-talking bad-ass. Even though Mayweather is now CEO of Philthy Rich Records, his top priority should be to forge a boxing identity that will increase his popularity.

"There's really no image," said Mayweather when asked how he wants the public to perceive him. "I just like to be myself. I like to be in fights where it's pick 'em. I like to be flashy and flamboyant and look good—and be humble about it."

He can be all that and more, but it will take time. Fans still haven't forgotten the "slave contract" remark or the messy split with his father. But what happened during and after the Corrales fight was a good start. If there's one thing that will win over even the most hard-headed fans, it's a series of performances as scintillating as the one Mayweather gave against Corrales.

"It will be accumulative," said Merchant of Mayweather's chance of becoming a major pay-per-view attraction. "It wasn't just that the Corrales fight was a dazzling performance. He fought not just

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Even with his guard up, Corrales can't block this explosive right hand from "Pretty Boy." The difference in speed between the two fighters was astonishing.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Referee Richard Steele picks up the count after one of Mayweather's five knockdowns. Corrales showed courage by continuing to get up, but his trainer and stepfather, Ray Woods, wisely decided to end the one-sided bout after the second knockdown of the 10th round.

with style, but also with passion, a passion to get it all done and to close the show. Not to get to the 10th round and say, as Roy Jones does, 'Why should I give the other guy his only chance of winning by trying to knock him out and walk into a punch?' With guys like Felix Trinidad, Shane Mosley, and Mayweather, it's like an artist who wants to complete the work because he doesn't want to leave anything out that has to be in it. Remember, when they came into the ring, it was Corrales who got the big cheer. But in the end, Mayweather won them over."

One of the best things that Mayweather has going for him are several quality rivals at 130 pounds, including WBA counterpart Joel Casamayor, 24-0 (15), and Brazilian knockout artist Acelino Freitas, 29-0 (29). Next up, however, will be mandatory challenger Jesus Chavez, 33-1 (23), another respectable adversary. But this trio, like Corrales, are only known to boxing fans, and it takes a match that transcends boxing to produce a PPV bonanza. Right now, the only possible opponent at that level is Naseem Hamed, a fact that Team Mayweather is acutely aware of. And while Top Rank holds out hope, Mayweather, who said he'd gladly drop down to 128 pounds to accommodate the 126-pound Hamed, doesn't sound very optimistic.

"To be honest, I don't think so," said Mayweather when asked if he really believed "The Prince" would accept his catchweight offer. "I asked him before, and basically, he doesn't want to fight me."

"There is not one chance in a million that that will ever happen," agreed Merchant.

Not only is a quick fix, via Naz, unlikely, the way boxing's financial hierarchy is structured is also a handicap. Below the heavyweight division, there's only room for a few guys to transcend boxing, much less the sports world. Leonard and Oscar De La Hoya reached that rarefied air, but Jones, for all his skills, never quite got there.

PHOTO BY GEORGE AZAR/PRINCE PROMOTIONS

Naseem Hamed usually exudes confidence, but Mayweather asserts that Naz wants no part of him. A bout with Hamed would be the most lucrative fight out there for Mayweather right now.

"Floyd may not have a chance to go from Pretty Boy to Golden Boy," said Merchant, "but he has a chance to go back to being Pretty Boy."

Which isn't too bad when you recall how hot Mayweather was in '98, back when the future seemed unlimited, back before we discovered what a brat he could be. But Mayweather is no dummy and now seems to have a better grasp of what it's going to take to turn him into a superstar.

"It's all about being smart. It's all about timing," Mayweather told THE RING. "The best time for me to shine was at the beginning of the year when there were no other big fights. And I opened up the year with a blast."

A few more blasts like the one that rocked Corrales' world, and maybe we won't care whether Mayweather is a brat or not. But in the meantime, he would be wise to duck controversy as adroitly as he avoided Corrales' punches, and polish up the sparkling smile and boyish charm. While the original Pretty Boy Floyd was a real gangsta, boxing's version would be better served playing the good guy—at least until the bell rings. ■

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LENNOX LEWIS vs. THE ALL-TIME GREATS

Can Today's Champ Hang With Yesterday's Heroes?

By William Dettloff

It's taken a long time, but Lennox Lewis is finally getting his props. There is no discussion about his legitimacy as the world heavyweight champion, the WBA notwithstanding. There is little to no debate anymore as to his standing as the world's best heavyweight. Everyone knows it. His last three fights at this writing—KO 2 Michael Grant, KO 2 Frans Botha, W 12 David Tua—proved it beyond doubt.

It's been a long time coming. Remember, Lewis' career really has spanned two eras. The first was the one that included guys like Razor Ruddock and Frank Bruno and Tony Tucker. Seems like ages ago, doesn't it? It was—it was the early-1990s. And here it is, the early-'00s and Lewis is still knocking guys stiff, shutting other guys out. And Ruddock, Tucker, and Bruno are long gone, thankfully, no matter what they say. So too, it seems, is the Lewis that struggled with both Bruno and Tucker before posting convincing wins.

Finally, and rightly, fight fans and aficionados suddenly are scrambling for an appropriate spot among the all-time heavyweight rankings into which they can insert Lewis. That's the least the guy can expect, having accomplished all that he has, and we're doing our part too.

On the following pages, we've matched Lewis against 10 all-time heavyweight greats. The ground rules are the usual ones: All fighters are in their prime and at their absolute best (for Lewis, by the way, that appears to be now, despite the fact that he's 35 years old), and the distance is 12 rounds. Excluded from the discussion are two of Lewis' contemporaries: Evander Holyfield and Mike Tyson. Holyfield because we've seen him twice already against Lewis and frankly that was more than enough, and Tyson because he just might meet Lewis down the road.

One last note: We considered Lewis, 38-1-1 (29), in total in this analysis, meaning we didn't pick just the guy who blew away Andrew Golota or just the guy who outboxed David Tua. He's a complex and versatile fighter, and it would have been unfair to apply a one-dimensional label to him. That helps him against some of the greats, and it hurts him too. You'll see what we mean.

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

JACK DEMPSEY

60-6-8 (50)

World Heavyweight Champion 1919-'26

Against Lewis, Dempsey faces a considerable disadvantage: He stood barely over six feet and never broke 200 pounds. He'd give away almost six inches in height, some 60 pounds on the scale, and just under two football fields in reach. Clearly the question is one that's been asked before: Can a little guy beat a giant? The answer, as we've learned from past David and Goliath encounters, is yes, if it's the right little guy and the right giant.

Dempsey specialized in chopping down giants. Jess Willard was 6'6", 240 pounds. Leading contender Fred Fulton, whom Dempsey stopped in one round on his way to the title, went 6'5". So Lewis' size wouldn't trouble Dempsey. His athleticism might. Lewis is far more athletic than were the lummoxes of Dempsey's day, Willard included, who was considered oafish even by 1919 standards. But Lewis is no Muhammad Ali or even Greg Page. When boxing rather than slugging—which is how we think he'd fight Dempsey—he remains, if effective, somewhat clumsy and less mobile than, say, Willie Meehan or Gene Tunney, two quick-footed types who gave Dempsey fits.

Dempsey was no David Tua. He'd be on Lewis all night long. He'd eat lots of jabs and some rights, too, but his chin was sound—one kayo loss in 78 fights—and he wouldn't back off. He'd maul Lewis, rough him up, and land enough overhand rights and hooks to take a well-deserved decision after 12 hard-fought rounds.

Jess Willard was not the only tall fighter who Dempsey cut down to size (inset). "The Manassa Mauler" also beat 6'5" Fred Fulton via first-round kayo. But could Dempsey have handled a boxer as big and as skillful as Lewis?

GENE TUNNEY

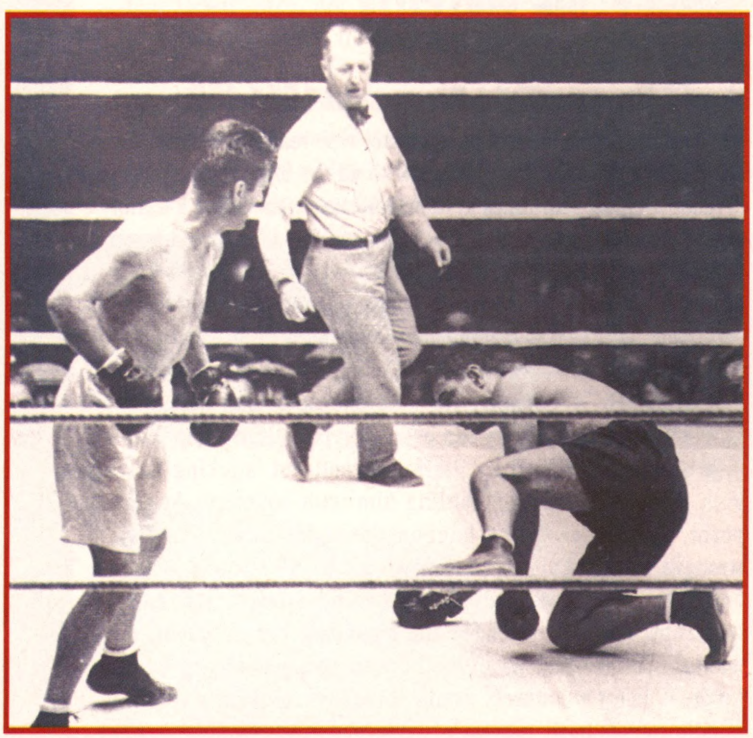
61-1-1 (45)

World Heavyweight Champion 1926-'28

Folks often forget that if not for Harry Greb, Rocky Marciano would be one of two heavyweight champions to retire undefeated. Some quibble that Greb deserved at least two of the decisions rendered in his five-fight series with Tunney, but he didn't get them, and "The Fighting Marine" went on to untold riches and fame by twice whipping an old, slow Jack Dempsey.

There is no doubt that Tunney was a cool, unflappable boxer and the best heavyweight technician of the 1920s. But he'd have little chance of even lasting the distance with Lewis. Not just because, like Dempsey and a few others, he'd face enormous physical disadvantages—in Tunney's case almost six inches in height and 60-plus pounds. But primarily because he was a boxer, a move-and-jab guy until he got his opponent in trouble, and then he'd step forward.

The problem is he'd never get Lewis in trouble and he just wasn't fast enough or big enough to outbox him from the outside. It would take a heavyweight of unthinkable speed, prime Muhammad Ali speed, to do what Tunney would have to do from the outside, and while fast, he didn't have that kind of speed. And, he didn't hit hard enough to worry Lewis. Lewis would know that and he'd step forward with complete confidence, rattle Tunney with jabs for four or five rounds, then flatten him with an overhand right.



Tunney weighed less than 190 pounds when he floored an over-the-hill Dempsey en route to a 10-round decision to retain the title in 1927. It's debatable, however, if "The Fighting Marine" could have done likewise against a 250-pound Lewis.

JOE LOUIS

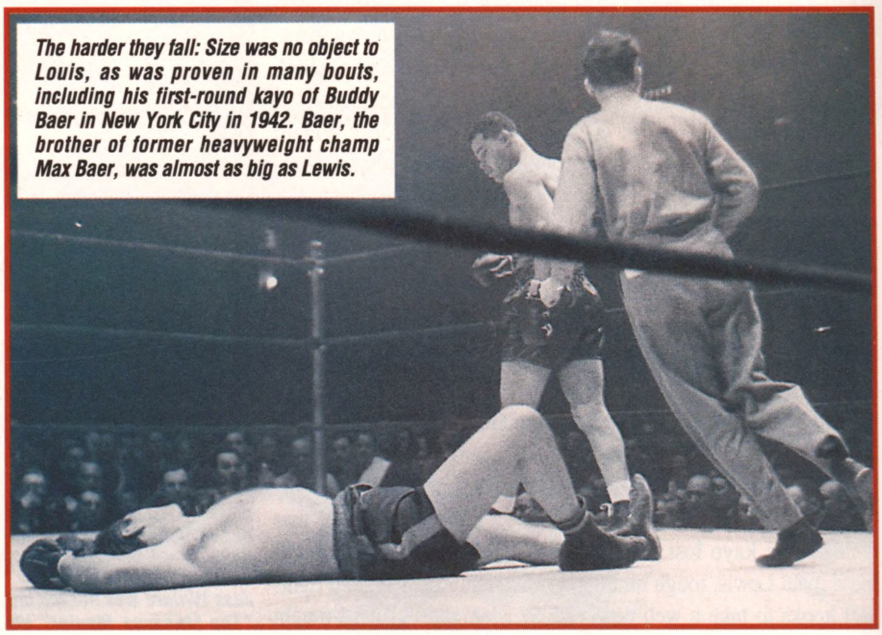
68-3 (54)

World Heavyweight Champion 1937-'49

In 1939, in his first fight after destroying Max Schmeling in their historic rematch, Louis knocked stiff an apparently terrified John Henry Lewis in the first round. There is every reason to suspect that although today's Lewis would last a bit longer, he eventually would end up in he same state as did poor John Henry.

Lewis' best chance would be to attack Louis in the first round and try for a quick stoppage. Louis' greatest weakness, which proved in most cases almost entirely inconsequential, was that his chin was a little on the soft side and if you could reach it without getting your head taken off, you had a chance. Hell, feather-fisted Billy Conn got him to do the drunk dance. So let's assume Lewis moves in at the opening bell and blasts away with rights. Maybe he catches Louis, maybe he doesn't. It's his best chance because there's no way he outboxes Louis for 12 rounds. Louis was too quick-fisted and too good at shrinking the ring and besides, Lewis is no Conn.

The size difference? Louis, who was almost 6'2" and in his prime weighed around 200 pounds, destroyed Primo Carnera, Buddy Baer, and Abe Simon, all of whom were around Lewis' height, though admittedly each was far less talented. No matter. If he attacks early, Lewis walks into a right-hand counter early. If he boxes, maybe he gets to the middle rounds before Louis chops him down. Either way it's Louis by knockout.



The harder they fall: Size was no object to Louis, as was proven in many bouts, including his first-round kayo of Buddy Baer in New York City in 1942. Baer, the brother of former heavyweight champ Max Baer, was almost as big as Lewis.

JERSEY JOE WALCOTT

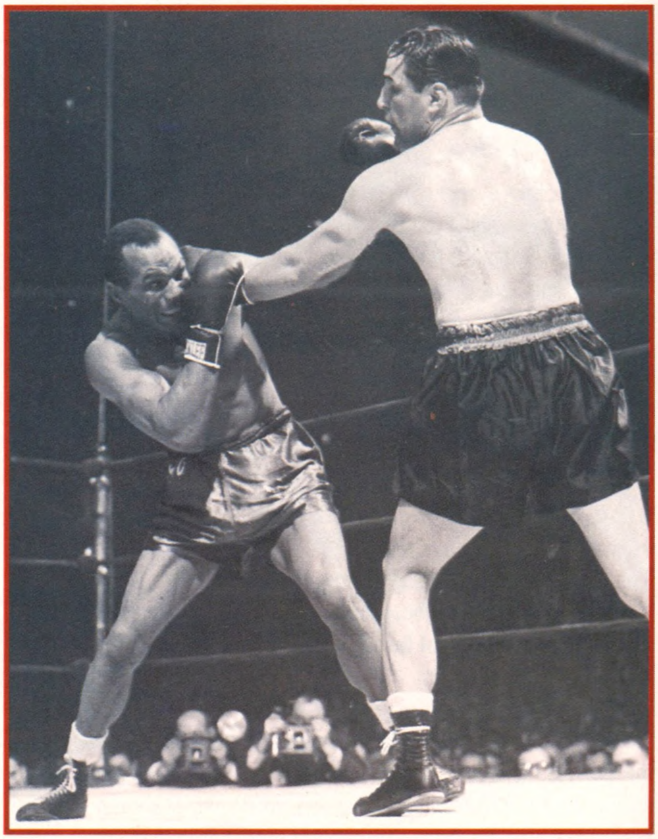
53-18-1 (33)

World Heavyweight Champion 1951-'52

Walcott was an interesting character who really was two different fighters: the slick cutie who lost to all the bigger names in the division and lost four times in title challenges—including a terribly unjust decision to Joe Louis in 1947—and the 37-year-old boxer-puncher who twice beat Ezzard Charles and nearly whipped Rocky Marciano in their 1952 war. The older version probably was the better one, so we'll use that one for the purposes of this analysis.

Clearly, Walcott was superior technically to Lewis and also was faster. He'd recognize that and choose to box rather than slug with Lewis, and one can easily envision him jumping out to a quick points lead by darting in and out, sticking Lewis with jabs, side-stepping, rattling him with counters. At some point, though, probably later in the fight, Lewis' size and strength would begin to wear down the 6', 195-pound Walcott and slow him down. Advancing behind a heavy jab, Lewis would measure Walcott for the right and the uppercut, and enough would land late in the bout to swing things in Lewis' favor. Walcott's counters would come less frequently from the middle rounds on.

Walcott could be hurt; Louis starched him in 11 in their rematch and Marciano did it twice. Abe Simon stopped him too, and so did Al Ettore, and Tiger Jack Fox. Lewis probably wouldn't, but his late dominance would get him a solid decision win.



Walcott slips a jab from towering Lee Oma during their 1946 bout, which "Jersey Joe" won via 10-round decision. Would Lewis also fall victim to Walcott's tricky style and heavy punching?

ROCKY MARCIANO

49-0 (43)

World Heavyweight Champion 1952-'56

A bloody Marciano steams into Ezzard Charles en route to a 15-round decision in defense of the title in 1954. Would "The Rock's" tender skin tissue stand up to 12 rounds of abuse from Lewis' long left jab?

At 5'10" and about 185 pounds, Marciano is at a greater physical disadvantage against Lewis than any other heavyweight immortal. In today's arena, he'd be five pounds under the cruiserweight limit. He'd be eight inches shorter than Lewis and almost 70 pounds lighter. Marciano was considered a smallish heavyweight in the 1950s. He was smaller than Jack Dempsey, who held the title 30 years earlier. We're talking small.

What made Marciano special, of course, was his resolve and his conditioning and his punch, in that order. But there are times when intangibles aren't enough, and surely that time for Marciano would come against Lewis, who would be just too big and too skilled. Provided Lewis kept the jab working, which, unfortunately, never is a given, he'd have little trouble keeping Marciano on the outside and on the wrong end of some stiff uppercuts and right crosses.

Marciano would never stop trying and pushing forward, and we wouldn't be surprised if he actually nailed Lewis a few times and gave him a couple of anxious moments. But there is nothing in his record that suggests he could handle a guy with Lewis' size and skill. Give him another couple of inches and maybe 15 or 20 pounds, and who knows, maybe he starches him. But at 5'10" and 185, we just can't see it. Lewis on cuts in seven.

SONNY LISTON

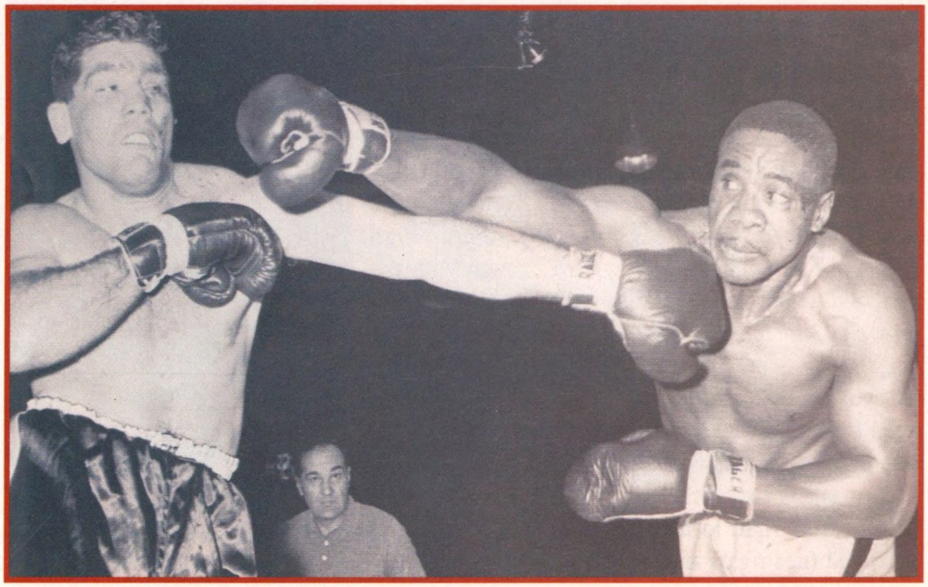
50-4 (39)

World Heavyweight Champion 1962-'64

There are a couple of schools of thought on Liston. The first is that he was among the very best big men in history and owned possibly the finest heavyweight jab ever. The second is that he is terribly overrated and was little more than a bully who crumbled when forcefully opposed. The truth is in between—he was neither a monster for destroying Floyd Patterson nor a coward for submitting to Cassius Clay—and that's the Liston that opposes Lewis.

First, the bad news for Liston: He wouldn't intimidate Lewis. Lewis has four inches on him and around 35 pounds (Liston being really the first big, modern, athletic heavyweight). Also, Liston would have to respect Lewis' power. Even with what was revered as a steel chin, he couldn't walk through Lewis and wind up the hooks and rights with impunity.

The bad news for Lewis: Liston was a genuine bad ass. He wouldn't fear Lewis' size, nor his right. He'd walk right to him, and, importantly, outjab him, as Ray Mercer did. He'd land with power and he'd land a lot, his surprisingly nimble feet creating openings Lewis couldn't shore up. Lewis would give ground early and box, and that would suit Liston fine. That's how most guys tried to beat him, and most of them lost. So, too, would Lewis, by late stoppage or unanimous decision.

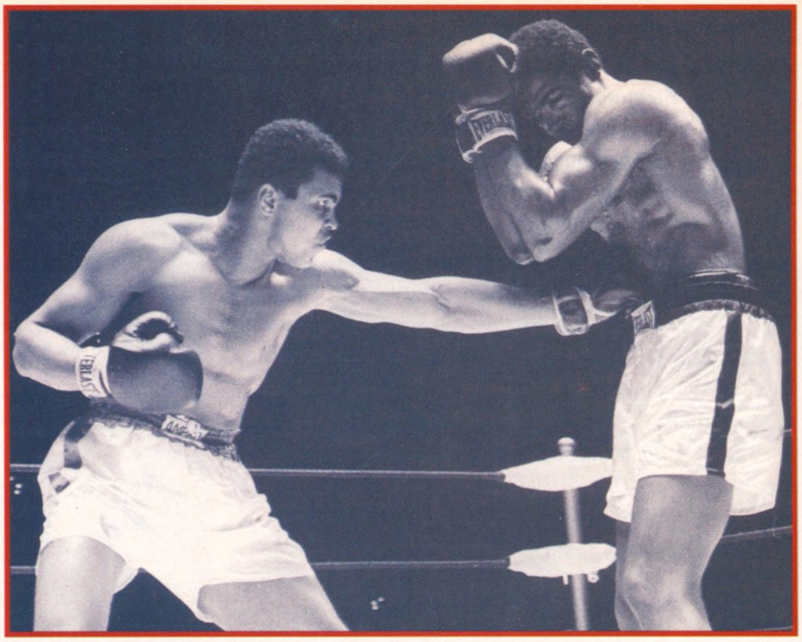


In his day, the powerful but athletically gifted Liston was a frightening presence, as seventh-round kayo victim Willi Besmanoff (pictured) discovered in their 1959 bout in Cleveland. But would he have been able to intimidate the cool-headed Lewis?

MUHAMMAD ALI

56-5 (37)

World Heavyweight Champion 1964-'67, '74-'78, '78-'79



Ali was so quick that he had little trouble outpointing the towering Ernie Terrell when they met at the Houston Astrodome in 1967. Would "The Greatest" have been able to do likewise against the sturdier, harder-hitting Lewis?

Sometimes a guy just doesn't match up well with another guy. It's not that he's a terrible fighter, necessarily; he just doesn't have the right makeup. Styles make fights and all that. That's the problem with Lewis against Ali. Lewis' style is all wrong. He's not nearly as good a fighter as Ali was either, but that's almost besides the point.

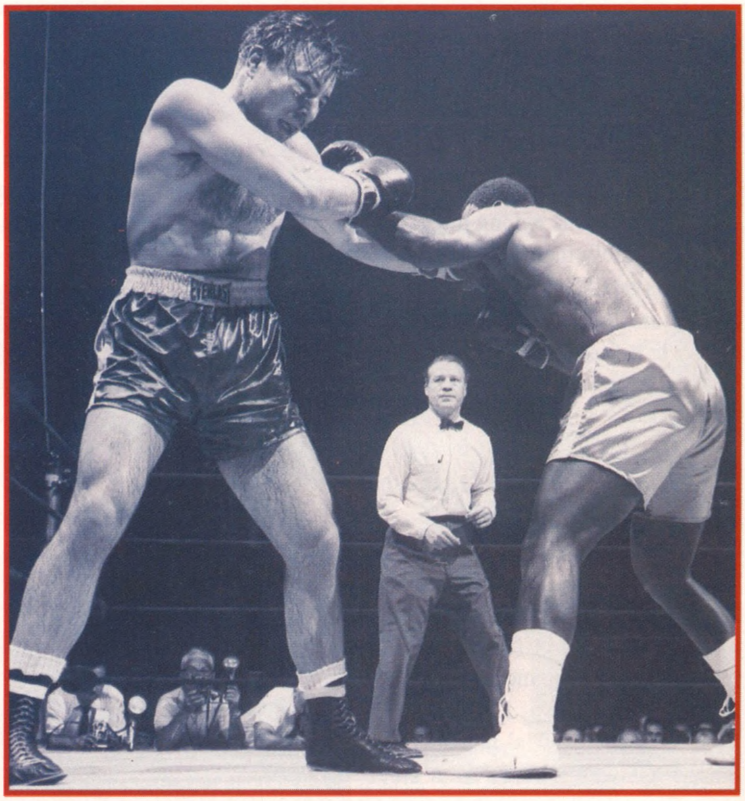
Ali was far too fast and mobile to lose to Lewis, and Lewis' single great advantage, his power, would count for naught because it's all in his right. If you could punch with the hook, like Joe Frazier, then you could use your punch against Ali. But right-hand punchers—Sonny Liston, Cleveland Williams, George Foreman—forget it. Lewis is no hooker, and even if he caught Ali with the right, well, so did Earnie Shavers. Enough said.

Having said all that, Lewis probably would make Ali look awful. Ali wasn't crazy about fighting tall guys. He beat them, but rarely looked good doing it. Also, after chasing Ali for a couple rounds, Lewis would probably change strategies and move and jab himself, forcing Ali into the uncomfortable role of aggressor. Whichever way, it's hard to picture Lewis winning more than a couple of rounds. Ali by unanimous decision in a stinker.

JOE FRAZIER

32-4-1 (27)

World Heavyweight Champion 1970-'73



Frazier made his relatively short stature work for him by ducking low as he worked his way inside, as illustrated in this photo from "Smokin' Joe's" fourth-round TKO of George Chuvalo in 1967 at Madison Square Garden.

There is a reason Frazier was completely impotent against George Foreman: Foreman had the strength, the size, and the power to force Frazier to move backward. (As did, to a lesser degree, Argentine strongman Oscar Bonavena, who gave Frazier fits.) Frazier's entire game was predicated on being able to move forward. If he could do that, he was a terrifying force, a non-stop hurt machine. If he couldn't, he was a sitting duck.

Physically, Lewis has the tools to do to Frazier what Foreman did. Though he probably doesn't have the earth-moving power Foreman wielded in his prime, he is bigger, heavier by 30 pounds than Foreman was, and surely hits hard enough with the right and, importantly, the uppercut, to stifle Frazier's rushes and force him backward, especially early. The question is, would he have the confidence and the malevolence to fight that way, even against a guy who wasn't quite six-feet tall and weighed just 205? Or would he box and move?

This one is easy. Frazier was a very slow starter. If Lewis walks right to him in round one, pushes him back, and fires rights and uppercuts, he stops him outright, probably inside three rounds. But he wouldn't do that. It's not him. He'd try to box the way he did against David Tua. Frazier is no Tua. You don't back him up, you don't win unless you're Muhammad Ali, and even he lost the first one. Frazier in 10.

GEORGE FOREMAN

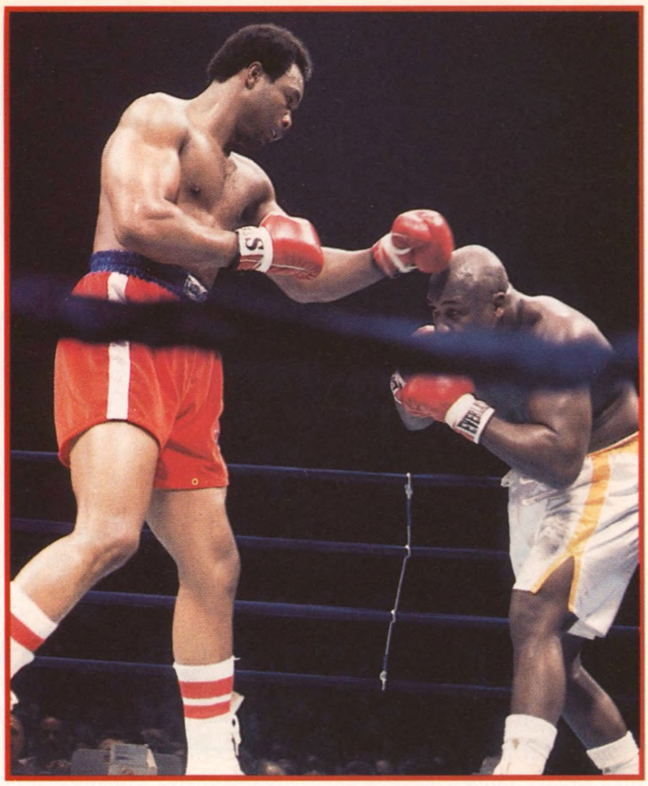
76-5 (68)

World Heavyweight Champion 1973-'74; WBA Champion 1994; IBF Champion 1994-'95

Perhaps more than any fighter in history, Foreman really was two different fighters: the brutish, frighteningly powerful but flawed 1970s version, and the more patient, relaxed, and slower '90s version. Though it might be more fun to use the latter version for this exercise since that one shared Lewis' era, the original was the better fighter.

A common misconception about the young Foreman is that anyone who could box and move reasonably well stood an excellent chance of beating him. This is based, presumably, on Foreman's losses to Muhammad Ali and Jimmy Young. If you subscribe to this universally held theory, you can readily see Lewis moving and using the jab to keep Foreman away and taking a decision. The problem is that the theory is wrong.

Ali didn't beat Foreman by moving and boxing. He beat him by lying on the ropes and making him punch until he exhausted himself. And Young was anything but a classic boxer. He was uncannily awkward and slippery. Making guys miss was his specialty. It is not Lewis'. Still, he would not engage Foreman in a shootout, despite being the bigger man. He'd try to box "Big George," like most everyone else did. And he'd get knocked out, like most everyone else did. Foreman in five.



A young Foreman bounces a left hook off Frazier's head in the second fight, which resulted in a fifth-round kayo victory for Big George. Would Lewis be able to withstand the attack of a prime time Foreman?

LARRY HOLMES

68-6 (44)

WBC Heavyweight Champion 1978-'83; IBF Champion 1984-'85

Holmes and Lewis share a couple of things in common: It took both a long time to be appreciated by the masses, and they both presided over especially weak heavyweight divisions. Maybe those two things are related; it's hard to get respect when your challengers are perceived as something less than threatening, even when you face everyone that's available.

Holmes was among the better heavyweight technicians ever, and his jab was one of the game's dominant punches in the 1980s. He had good speed and legs for a big guy, and his resolve was remarkable. But he would have trouble with Lewis. He struggled to one degree or another with almost every fighter he faced who was bigger than he: Roy Williams, Gerry Cooney, Bonecrusher Smith, Carl Williams. And if that bigger fighter had a good jab, as Lewis does when he uses it, it became very difficult indeed. You can argue that Smith and Williams came past Holmes' prime, but it remains that bigger fighters gave Holmes trouble shorter fighters didn't.

Lewis would be the puncher in this fight and he'd press Holmes with the jab and look to unload the right. Holmes, meanwhile, would move a lot, jab, and occasionally cross with his own right. Who would get more done? Styles make fights, and Holmes doesn't match up well in this one. Lewis by split decision. ■

Like Lewis, Holmes ruled over a mediocre heavyweight division, but against his bigger challengers, like Gerry Cooney (pictured), Holmes usually struggled. Lewis' size, and his potent jab, could make him a difficult assignment for "The Easton Assassin."

THE 2000 OLYMPIANS TURN PRO

THE RING'S First Impression

With all the optimism, excitement, and hype surrounding the professional debuts in January of 10 Olympians on a pair of cards televised by HBO and Showtime, it was easy to forget that every last one of them had tallied a loss the last time out. That's just the way it is when your amateur career ends at the Olympics with anything other than a gold medal.

So in a sense, these fighters weren't just getting started. They were also coming back. And all of them succeeded in starting new winning streaks, though the pressure-packed pro debut is about more than just winning. It's about looking good, perhaps convincing people you're a future champ, especially if you're lucky enough to have your first pro fight televised.

In this feature, that's a big part of what we're examining: How good did they look? How bright are their futures? For some, like teen sensation Francisco Bojado, they used this platform to leap from obscurity to the brink of stardom in one fight. For others, like American bronze medalist Clarence Vinson, they failed to take advantage of this opportunity and left us wondering how far they'll make it in the paid ranks. But there's one thing they all have in common: After losing their final amateur fight, they all won their initial professional contest. That, as they say, is the bottom line.

Here then, appearing in alphabetical order, are capsule profiles of the 10 Olympians who turned pro either on Showtime at the Mohegan Sun Casino or on the HBO-televised card at Madison Square Garden two weeks later.

MICHAEL BENNETT

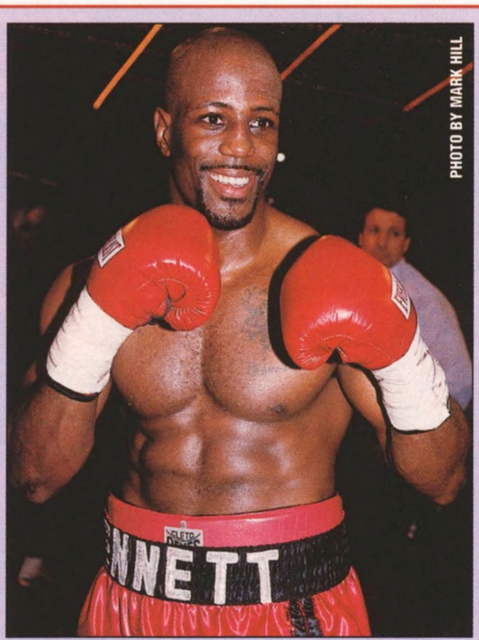


PHOTO BY MARK HILL

Is Bennett the new Evander Holyfield?

Hometown: Chicago, Illinois

Birthdate: March 26, 1971

Olympic Resume: Bennett charged out superbly in his first-round bout, smashing Wojciech Bartnik (Poland), 11-2. That set up a showdown with two-time defending Olympic heavyweight champion Felix Savon (Cuba). Bennett was completely outclassed by the fluid Savon. He had no answer for the Cuban's big right hand, and was ousted on a third-round points stoppage, 23-8.

Professional Affiliation: DiBella Entertainment (adviser); Arnie Rosenthal (manager); George Hernandez (trainer)

Pro Debut: KO 1 Andrew Hutchinson, New York, New York, January 27, 2001

Debut Weight: 201

First Impression: Bennett crushed Hutchinson, 1-2-1, a former New York Golden Gloves champ, with the most emphatic stoppage of the MSG show. Bennett hurt his opponent with a right hand midway through the opening round. Sensing he had Hutchinson in danger, Bennett quickly closed in, unfurling four right hands and two left hooks on the defenseless Hutchinson before Arthur Mercante Jr. finally stepped in and called the bout over at the 1:46 mark.

Early Prognosis: Bennett has a compelling storyline, serving seven years for armed robbery and making the Olympic team after learning how to box in prison. But because of his age, Bennett needs to move quickly. And because of his size, he may have a better chance of winning a world title as a cruiserweight—if he can drop a few pounds—than as a heavyweight.

FRANCISCO BOJADO

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Mexican Olympian Bojado steals the show stopping Castor

Hometown: Guadalajara, Mexico
Birthdate: May 11, 1983
Olympic Resume: The 17-year-old Bojado was the youngest member of Mexico's 2000 Olympic team. He stopped Yohanes Shifraw (Ethiopia) in his first bout at the Sydney Games, but then lost a narrow 15-12 decision to Kamil Dzamalutdinov (Russia) and was eliminated.
Professional Affiliation: Main Events (promoter); Shelly Finkel, Joe Hernandez, Alfonso Marquez (co-managers); Alfonso Marquez (trainer)
Pro Debut: KO 2 Detrick Castor, Uncasville, Connecticut, January 13, 2001
Debut Weight: 132½
First Impression: You couldn't have asked for a more impressive debut. "Panchito" tore apart Castor with a withering assault for a second-round knockout. He dropped Castor—who was better than his 0-2-1 record seems to indicate—with a scorching right near the end of the first, then went right back to work in the second. When a left hook wobbled Castor, Bojado leaped to the attack and finished him off with a deadly two-fisted barrage at the 1:38 mark.
Early Prognosis: Showtime viewers and fans on hand at the Mohegan Sun can't stop raving about this guy. While it's too early to go overboard, unless there's a hidden flaw, Bojado is a future champ.

DANTE CRAIG

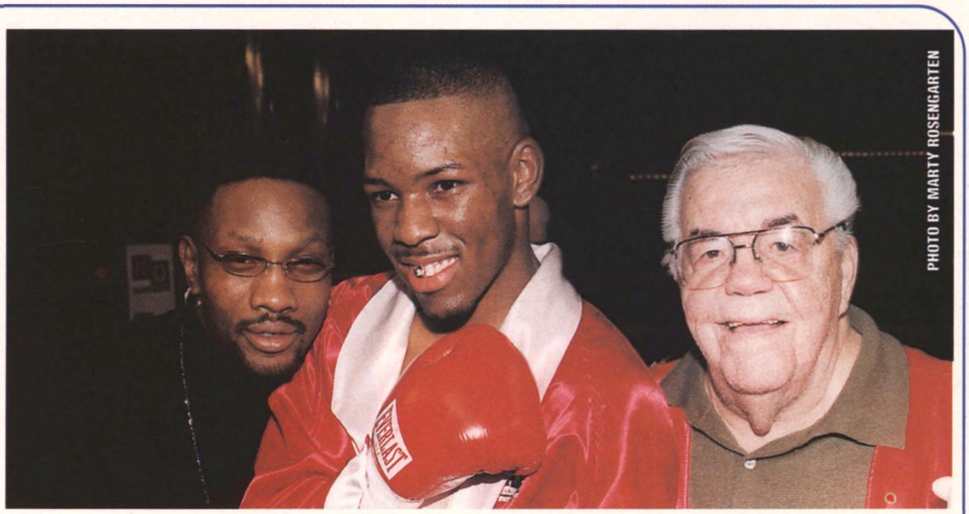


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Craig celebrates his first win with Pernell Whitaker and Lou Duva

Hometown: Cincinnati, Ohio
Birthdate: August 20, 1978
Olympic Resume: Emotionally fueled by the death of his three-week-old son, Dante Jr., earlier in the year, Craig got off to an excellent start, scoring a points stoppage over Fadel Showban (Egypt) in his first-round fight. In the second round of the tournament, however, Craig was knocked down and convincingly outpointed by Bulent Ulusoy (Turkey).
Professional Affiliation: Duva Boxing (promoter); Lou Duva, Tommy Brooks (co-managers/co-trainers)
Pro Debut: KO 1 Darren Fallen, New York, New York, January 27, 2001
Debut Weight: 147½
First Impression: There wasn't much we could gather from his 123-second demolition of the appropriately named Fallen, 1-1 (1), except that Craig has one-punch kayo power in his right hand. Less than two minutes into the fight, the six-foot-tall Craig positioned Fallen in a neutral corner, used his long jab to gauge his distance, and lowered the boom with a hard, straight right to the jaw. Fallen went down hard and was wobbling when he regained his feet, prompting referee Pete Santiago to wave off the contest.
Early Prognosis: Duva seems very high on Craig, but it's just too soon to tell how far he'll go. Repeated injuries to his right hand threaten to hold him back, but otherwise, there's nothing negative to say about the lanky welterweight at this point.

ROCKY JUAREZ

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Juarez outpoints Adorno, but fails to impress

Hometown: Houston, Texas

Birthdate: April 15, 1980

Olympic Resume: On his way to the most impressive run of any American in Sydney, Juarez tallied four wins, including a victory over the 1996 featherweight gold medalist. But in the gold medal round, Juarez lost a highly controversial decision to Bekzat Sattarkhanov (Kazakhstan), who held excessively, but was never penalized by the Russian referee.

Professional Affiliation: Main Events (promoter); Shelly Finkel (manager); Ray Ontiveros (trainer)

Pro Debut: W 4 Pascali Adorno, Uncasville, Connecticut, January 13, 2001

Debut Weight: 125½

First Impression: Billed by the folks at Showtime as the most talented of the U.S. Olympians, Juarez fell short of expectations against Puerto Rican southpaw Adorno, 2-1. Juarez never quite found his groove, and other than hurting his opponent with a right to the body in round two, he was generally ineffective on his way to a decision win by scores of 40-36 (twice) and 39-37.

Juarez was touted as having a style suited for the pros, and it's true that his aggression, willingness to trade, and bodypunching should serve him better in the paid ranks than in the amateurs. But as he followed and missed Adorno all night, his modest speed and unexceptional power were all too obvious.

Early Prognosis: Off this one performance, Juarez might draw comparisons to Wayne McCullough—tough and poised, but not the most gifted guy around. He'll probably be a factor at featherweight, but not necessarily a star.

JOSE NAVARRO

PHOTO BY MARK HILL

Navarro showed excellent boxing skills

Hometown: Los Angeles, California

Birthdate: June 7, 1981

Olympic Resume: The United States' flyweight representative came from behind to win close decisions in his first two Olympic bouts, then lost a 23-12 decision to eventual bronze medalist Jerome Thomas (France).

Professional Affiliation: DiBella Entertainment (adviser); Golden Boy Enterprises (manager); Frank Rivera (trainer)

Pro Debut: W 4 Kenny Berrios, New York, New York, January 27, 2001

Debut Weight: 115

First Impression: Southpaw Navarro had an opportunity to showcase his classic, stand-up boxing skills against late sub Berrios, who took the assignment on 36 hours notice. Berrios, 6-10-1, was the perfect foil: a short, aggressive, Mexican clubfighter with no power.

Navarro avoided most of Berrios' offerings while peppering his foe with straight counters. Referee Mike Ortega looked like he might stop it when Navarro's punches started to pile up in the third, but Berrios hung tough and lasted the distance. The decision in Navarro's favor was unanimous, 40-36 and 40-35 (twice).

Early Prognosis: Having Oscar De La Hoya's backing will smooth his path. But even though the junior bantamweight division is relatively weak, Navarro's lack of punching power will still be a problem, especially at the championship level.

JERSON RAVELO

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Referee Pete Santiago raises Ravelo's arm after quick win

Hometown: Newark, New Jersey
Birthdate: July 30, 1977

Olympic Resume: A Dominican immigrant who became a U.S. citizen in 1998, Ravelo was beaten out by Jeff Lacy (via controversial decision) for a berth on America's squad. However, as he held dual citizenship, Ravelo went to Sydney as a member of the Dominican Republic's team, where he lost to Paul Miller (Australia) by a razor-thin 8-7 decision in his first match.

Professional Affiliation: DiBella Entertainment (adviser); Gary Gittlesohn (manager); Jose Rosario (trainer)

Pro Debut: KO 1 Miguel Guttierrez, New York, New York, January 27, 2001

Debut Weight: 165½

First Impression: The crowd-pleasing Ravelo caught Guttierrez, 1-1, coming in with a counter right for the first of three knockdowns. A couple of clubbing rights to the back of the head accounted for the second decking, and a left-right combination caused the third, which prompted referee Pete Santiago to call it off at 2:12 without another count.

Early Prognosis: The hard-hitting Ravelo could very well be the sleeper of the bunch, and judging by the large, vocal contingent of supporters on hand for his pro debut, he won't have any trouble selling tickets.

JERMAIN TAYLOR

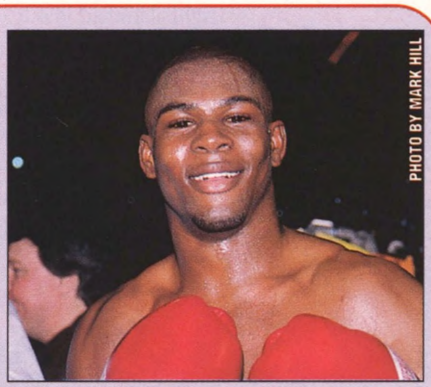


PHOTO BY MARK HILL

Taylor has both personality and a big punch

Hometown: Little Rock, Arkansas
Birthdate: August 11, 1978

Olympic Resume: Taylor captured a bronze in Sydney, and administered the singlemost devastating punch of the tournament. Facing Dimitry Usagin (Bulgaria) in his first-round fight, Taylor knocked his man cold with a right hand. He then tallied two decision wins before dropping a 29-14 points stoppage to eventual gold medal winner Yermakhan Ibraimov (Kazakhstan).

Professional Affiliation: DiBella Entertainment (adviser); Pat Burns, Mark Vaz (co-managers); Pat Burns (trainer)

Pro Debut: KO 4 Chris Walsh, New York, New York, January 27, 2001

Debut Weight: 158½

First Impression: Taylor was among the most impressive of the former Olympians making their pro debuts on HBO's *KO Nation* show. "Bad Intentions" showed that same explosive right hand he displayed in Sydney, plus some poise, by twice flooring Walsh, 17-5-1 (6), en route to a stoppage 16 seconds into the fourth round. Walsh, the most experienced opponent any of the former Olympians faced, was knocked down by an overhand right in the third, then finished in the fourth with a short right that dropped him to his knees.

Early Prognosis: Taylor appears as if he has star qualities both inside and outside the ring. After his powerful right hand did the talking inside the ropes, Taylor impressed the crowd gathered at the postfight press conference, displaying personality, a bright smile, and a fashionable outfit.

(Continued on page 38)

PAOLO VIDOZ

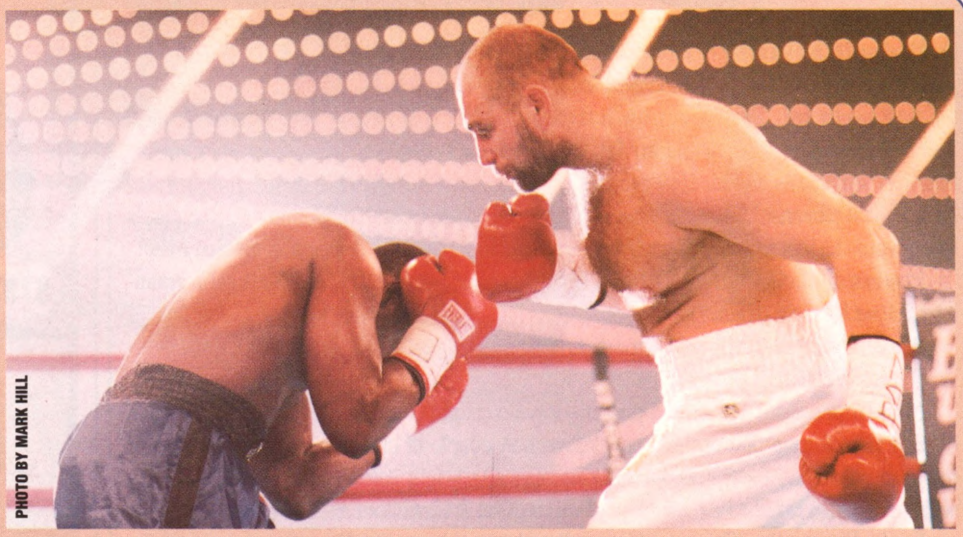


PHOTO BY MARK HILL

Italy's Vidoz mauls Morris for an easy victory

Hometown: Gorizia, Italy
Birthdate: August 21, 1970
Olympic Resume: Vidoz won a super heavyweight bronze medal for Italy at the 2000 Olympics. He lost to eventual gold medalist Audley Harrison (U.K.) in the semifinals, suffering a broken nose en route to a wide decision defeat.
Professional Affiliation: Salvatore Cherchi (manager/promoter); Jose Rosario (trainer)

Pro Debut: KO 1 Chris Morris, New York, New York, January 27, 2001
Debut Weight: 237½
First Impression: Mixing his shots well to both the head and body, the pudgy-looking Italian showed a nice assortment of punches to dispose of easy-mark Morris, 216, 2:22 into the first round. It was strictly one-way traffic, with Morris, 1-1-1, going down the first time from a left to the body, then again after a left-right slammed into his head.
Early Prognosis: Some say Vidoz, known in amateur circles for having a big heart, might be the next Frans Botha. The guess here is that he's more like the next Francesco Damiani.

CLARENCE VINSON

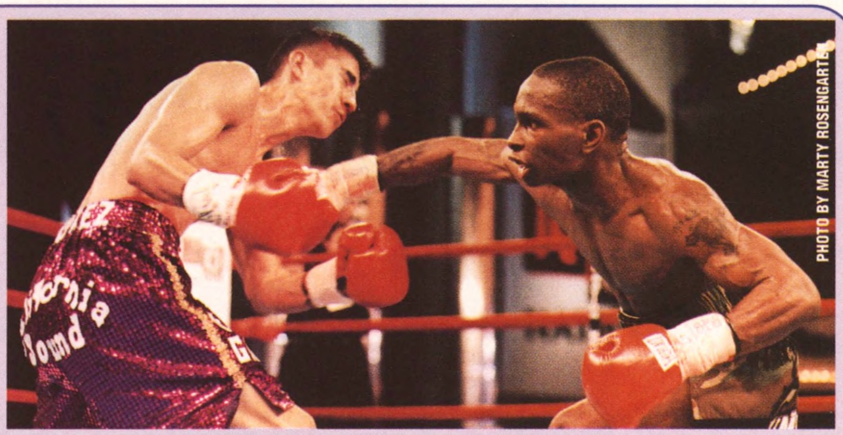


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Vinson has one of his few good moments against Valdez

Hometown: Washington, D.C.
Birthdate: July 10, 1978
Olympic Resume: U.S. co-captain Vinson took the bronze in the bantamweight division, going the distance in all four of his bouts. He trailed in his first-round fight before rallying to beat Rachid Boudita (France), and to reach the medal round, Vinson had to defeat amateur world champion Olteanu George-Crinu (Romania). In the semifinals, Vinson lost a 9-2 decision to the excellent Guillermo Rigondeaux Ortiz (Cuba), who went on to win the gold.
Professional Affiliation: DiBella Entertainment (adviser); Gary Gittlesohn (manager); Ham Johnson (trainer)

Pro Debut: W 4 Adrian Valdez, New York, New York, January 27, 2001
Debut Weight: 117½
First Impression: Vinson began his pro career in dubious fashion, getting roundly booed by the 4,387 at the Garden while taking a four-round decision over Valdez, 3-2-2, probably the toughest opponent any of the former Olympians met in their debuts. The smallish bantamweight showboated during spans of the fight, raising the ire of his trainer, Ham Johnson. Vinson showed some moxie by fighting through a cut over his right eye, caused by a headbutt in the second round, and won by unanimous scores of 40-36, 40-37, and 39-37.
Early Prognosis: Vinson needs the most work of the fighters analyzed here. He has little punching power, and his antics against Valdez were a serious turnoff during an early stage in his career when fan support is imperative.

RICARDO WILLIAMS JR.

Hometown: Cincinnati, Ohio
Birthdate: June 25, 1981
Olympic Resume: One of only two Americans to reach the gold medal round, Williams cruised through his first three bouts, won a thrilling 42-41 decision over Diogenes Luna (Cuba) in the semifinals, and came home with a silver after falling short against Mahamadkadyz Abdullaev (Uzbekistan) in the finals.
Professional Affiliation: DiBella Entertainment (adviser); Ricardo Williams Sr., Buddy LaRosa (co-managers); Ricardo Williams Sr. (trainer)
Pro Debut: KO 4 Anthony Simpkins, New York, New York, January 27, 2001
Debut Weight: 140
First Impression: Squaring off against the capable Simpkins, 5-1-1 (2), Williams didn't quite show the brilliance to justify the $1.4-million signing bonus DiBella gave him, but still looked like the most promising of the U.S. Olympians. Williams had way too many moves for Simpkins, and earned a stoppage with a series of booming straight left hands at the 2:10 mark of round four.

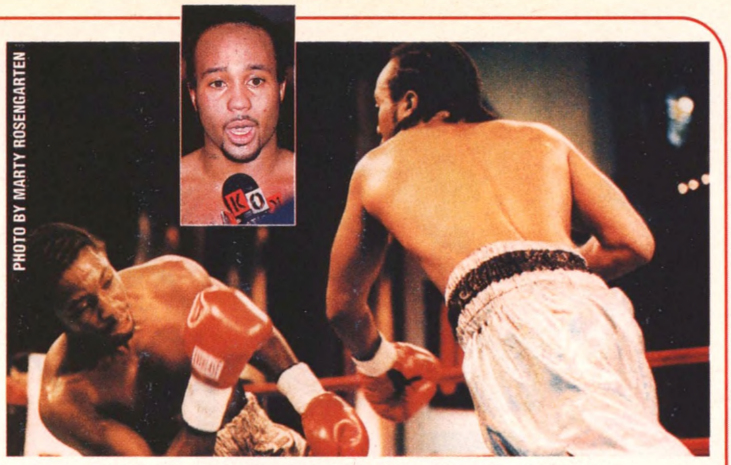


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Williams stops Simpkins, then talks about it on **KO Nation**

Williams, a southpaw, has excellent hand speed and a wide assortment of punches, but he also tasted quite a few left hook counters, and left himself wide open whenever he shifted his punches toward the body. "Little Ricky's" inability to knock Simpkins down also hinted at a lack of pure punching power.
Early Prognosis: Williams is in a weight range packed with talented fighters who will still be there when he's ready for his title shot in a couple of years. He's a fairly safe bet to become an alphabet champion, but has a *long* way to go before he could be competitive with, say, Floyd Mayweather. ■

LET'S DO IT AGAIN!

The 10 Rematches We'd Most Like To See

There was a time when rematches were a much bigger part of boxing than they are today. In the old days, if two guys put on an entertaining scrap, they were inevitably matched again, maybe only a week or two later. A controversial decision was almost always followed by a return go. Heck, some fighters fought each other so frequently, you'd have sworn they were going steady. Jake LaMotta still likes to joke that he fought Sugar Ray Robinson so many times (six, actually), he got diabetes.

But the game has changed over the years, and although still a part of boxing, the rematch is nowhere near as prevalent as it used to be. To a degree, that's a good thing. There was a time when the contract for virtually all championship bouts contained a rematch clause, which guaranteed the champion another crack at the title if he lost. This sometimes led to round-robins that effectively shut out other worthy challengers, while the same two guys traded the title back and forth.

Today's relative lack of rematches also has something to do with the current obsession with undefeated records. If Fighter A tops Fighter B in a close bout, Fighter A's management is disinclined to allow a rematch, even if a healthy purse is offered, basically because he doesn't want to risk his man's pristine record.

Still, there's a lot to be said for rematches. For starters, even though they don't always live up to their forerunners, customers at least have a pretty good idea of what to expect before buying tickets. It's also a great way to settle disputes when the first fight ended controversially, and it gives the participants a way to either redeem themselves, prove the first result wasn't a fluke, and/or firmly establish their dominance.

The past year or so has produced a number of outstanding bouts that beg for a rematch. Therefore, in an effort to cultivate good fights, THE RING has selected 10 recent fights that the editors believe are ripe for rematches. Some were simply so much fun to watch the first time, we want to experience the thrill all over again. Others are attempts to right wrongs or cases where it's still not clear which fighter is the best. Here, then, are the 10 fights we'd most like to see again.

ERIK MORALES vs. MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA

Most spectators thought Barrera won the war, but Morales got the decision

WHAT HAPPENED THE FIRST TIME: It was a fight so magnificent, so filled with ferocious two-way action that it beat out numerous other terrific fights to be selected THE RING's Fight of the Year for 2000. Also the perfect antidote for the boxing blues. Anytime you're feeling depressed about the state of the Sweet Science, pop a tape of this baby in the VCR, and you'll remember why you became a fan in the first place. The only downer was the 12-round split decision in Morales' favor, which brings us to …

WHY WE WANT A REMATCH: Whenever the nod goes to the wrong guy, it's bound to generate a certain amount of indignation, but when a bad call comes at the conclusion of a truly great fight, people really get emotional. Hopefully, a rematch will give us a better decision (if it indeed goes the distance) and a sense of closure. If it's anywhere close to being as good as the first one, it just might join Tony Zale-Rocky Graziano (1945, '46) and Ray Robinson-Carmen Basilio (1957, '58) as the only pairings to repeat as THE RING's Fight of the Year.

CHANCE OF IT HAPPENING: A lot depends on how Barrera fares in his upcoming showdown with Naseem Hamed. Obviously, if he wins, a rematch with Morales would be even bigger, but beating Naz isn't a prerequisite. As long as Barrera is competitive against "The Prince" and makes an exciting fight out of it, a second bout with Morales will still be an attraction. This also might be one of those rematches like Julio Cesar Chavez-Meldrick Taylor, when they don't fight again until one of the fighters has begun to decline.

WHO WILL WIN: Win or lose, the Hamed fight figures to be a taxing one for Barrera. Add that to the wear and tear of his wars with Junior Jones, Kennedy McKinney, and Morales, and you have to figure that Morales will probably be the fresher fighter. Next time, Morales not only wins the decision, he deserves it!

FELIX TRINIDAD vs. OSCAR DE LA HOYA

"The Golden Boy" streaks to an early lead against "Tito"

WHAT HAPPENED THE FIRST TIME: Was it a case of stupidity, inadequate conditioning, discretion getting the better of valor, or a combination of factors? Whatever the story, there's no doubt that De La Hoya blew his first fight with Trinidad by running the last three rounds. True, "Tito" must be given credit for applying steady pressure and having enough left to take advantage of "The Golden Boy's" late-round fade, but even Trinidad's strongest supporters know, in their heart of hearts, that it was more a case of De La Hoya *losing* the fight than Trinidad *winning* it. Regardless of how you spin it, it wasn't a particularly good night for either fighter.

WHY WE WANT A REMATCH: Except for pay-per-view sales, which reached an all-time high for a non-heavyweight fight, there's no doubt that the first Trinidad-De La Hoya bout was a major letdown. But that doesn't necessarily mean it would be a dud if they fought again. De La Hoya, stung by accusations that he punked out, has pledged that if he ever gets another crack at Trinidad, he'll leave his track shoes at home. It should also be remembered that numerous observers, including many members of the media, believe De La Hoya was robbed and that he deserved the decision despite virtually giving away the last three rounds.

CHANCE OF IT HAPPENING: This is a weighty issue (pun intended), and the closer Trinidad gets to a superfight with unified light heavyweight champion Roy Jones, the less likely a rematch with the somewhat smaller De La Hoya becomes. Even so, De La Hoya, who heretofore has claimed he wants to continue fighting as a welterweight, could easily change his mind and move up in weight in hopes of redeeming himself against the man who handed him his first pro defeat. It's a longshot, but the first fight generated so much money, it would be foolish to rule it out entirely.

WHO WILL WIN: If it were any other fighter blessed with De La Hoya's phenomenal fighting ability, we'd be tempted to pick him in a rematch. After all, De La Hoya did give Trinidad a boxing lesson for much of their first encounter. He just failed to finish the job.

De La Hoya's new trainer, Floyd Mayweather, certainly has a daunting task ahead of him. He has to repair all the damage not just to De La Hoya's game, but also to his fragile psyche, and he has to do it in a relatively short time. Bottom line: Trinidad triumphs in the rematch without any help from the judges.

SHANE MOSLEY vs. OSCAR DE LA HOYA

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

The De La Hoya-Mosley classic was close enough to warrant an encore

WHAT HAPPENED THE FIRST TIME: This was a career-defining performance for Mosley, a signature fight that catapulted him to superstar status and the number-one position in THE RING's pound-for-pound ratings. Although the official decision in his favor was split, few outside of De La Hoya's camp thought it should have gone the other way. Still, everybody seemed to agree it had been a splendid fight, a much needed image-enhancer for the Sweet Science. Unlike in the points loss to Trinidad, The Golden Boy fought hard from first bell to last and had nothing to be ashamed of. Nonetheless, Mosley's speed and versatility throughout, and his dominance in the blistering final round—three minutes of brilliance that made all the difference on the official scorecards—made him a clear-cut winner.

WHY WE WANT A REMATCH: It was a close, fiercely contested bout fought with an unusually high degree of skill by both men, the kind of fight where even those in the $1,000 seats got their money's worth. For that reason alone, an encore would be more than welcome. But beyond that, a return go makes sense for both men. De La Hoya needs a shot at instant redemption, and Mosley needs a marquee opponent.

CHANCE OF IT HAPPENING: There was a rematch clause in the contract for their first fight, and De La Hoya could have fought Mosley again by now if he really wanted to. But his break from long-time promoter Bob Arum and budding singing career have kept Oscar inactive since the Mosley fight in June '00. De La Hoya plans to ease back into action against used-up Arturo Gatti, so if another fight with Sugar Shane does come to pass, it won't be until late-'01 at the earliest.

WHO WILL WIN: So much depends on De La Hoya's mindset. If Oscar is totally focused, and if he and the cast of characters that surround him allow Mayweather to do his job, there's an outside chance that De La Hoya will mature into an even better fighter than he was a couple of years ago. But at age 28, the Golden One is no longer a boy and probably too set in his ways to make significant changes. If there's a next time, Mosley, unburdened by Oscar's outside distractions and emotional turmoils, beats him even more convincingly.

ROY JONES vs. BERNARD HOPKINS

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Even Jones fans agree he turned in a sub-par performance against Hopkins

WHAT HAPPENED THE FIRST TIME: "It was less than a scintillating Roy Jones performance. He didn't seem to have his normal zest. I don't think you saw Roy Jones at his best. Every fighter is allowed a sub-par performance." A critique of Jones' pay-per-view waltz with Eric Harding? No, it's what HBO's Ross Greenburg had to say about Jones' 12-round decision over Hopkins to win the vacant IBF middleweight title back in '93.

While "less than scintillating" has described a lot of Jones' performances since then, it was in the Hopkins fight that we first saw clues to the sort of incongruous fighter Jones has become. How much the hard-hitting Hopkins had to do with that is difficult to say, but it was certainly the first time Jones failed to dominate an opponent.

WHY WE WANT A REMATCH: Hopkins has earned the right by running up a 16-0-1 (12) with 1 no-contest record since, including 12 successful defenses of the IBF belt he won when Jones moved up to super middle. On top of that, Jones bellyaches that he can't find opponents good enough to inspire him, while turning a deaf ear to "The Executioner's" pleas for a rematch. At the very least, another bout between the pair would satisfy the boxing consumers' desire to see Jones against a worthy adversary and give Hopkins the superfight he's worked so diligently to obtain.

CHANCE OF IT HAPPENING: It was hoped during Jones' lengthy contract negotiation with HBO that the cable giant would insists that Jones consent to fight better opponents before closing a new deal. But the fact that his first fight under the recent three-year, six-fight agreement is against obscure and untested Derrick Harmon isn't exactly encouraging. At one point, Jones did say he'd fight Hopkins, but wanted to structure a deal so financially unfavorable to the long-reigning middleweight champ that things never got past the preliminary stages. In other words: Forget about it unless HBO does some serious arm-twisting.

WHO WILL WIN: It's safe to assume that Hopkins will make Jones fight harder than he has since the last time they met. The Philadelphia tough guy is better than Lou Del Valle, Montell Griffin, and Eric Harding, the only adversaries to give Jones the slightest bit of bother since the Hopkins fight. Whether or not Hopkins can beat him depends on how much of Jones' fighting edge has been dulled by his schedule of patsies. His speed advantage will probably still be enough for him to run and counter his way to an dull decision, but if anyone can take advantage of Jones' noncombative disposition, it's the man who calls himself the "Satchel Paige of boxing."

DAVID TUA vs. HASIM RAHMAN

Rahman was winning handily until the end of the ninth round

WHAT HAPPENED THE FIRST TIME: This was the fight that earned Tua a title shot against Lennox Lewis. Unfortunately, the Samoan needed the help of a cheap shot and an accommodating referee to get the job done.

Rahman outboxed Tua for most of the fight and built a lead on the scorecards, but began to slow down in the eighth. Tua kept closing the distance in the ninth and had his man pinned on the ropes, under heavy pressure when the bell interrupted his handiwork. Unable to resist temptation after what had been, up until that moment, a highly frustrating fight, Tua unleashed a monster left hook that landed flush and clearly hurt Rahman.

Although badly stunned by the flagrant foul, Rahman was not given any extra time to recover, thanks in part to the diversion tactics of Tua's cornerman Lou Duva, who jumped into the ring when the action continued after the bell and distracted referee Telis Assimenios.

Rahman was still suffering the effects of Tua's late punch when he answered the bell for the 10th, and Tua immediately jumped on his stricken foe, bulled him into the ropes, and began to fire away. A few more good blows thudded home, but just when it looked like Rahman might ride out the assault, Assimenios stopped the fight, despite vigorous protest from Rahman and his corner.

WHY WE WANT A REMATCH: There were more subplots to this one than in a cheap detective novel. But there's no question, Rahman got a raw deal and deserves an opportunity to even the score.

CHANCE OF IT HAPPENING: If Tua wants to repair his sagging image after his embarrassing non-effort against Lewis, Rahman would be a terrific place to start, and it's the sort of fight most TV networks would be interested in broadcasting. A lot depends on whether Tua wants it, and on what happens in Rahman's upcoming fight with Lewis.

WHO WILL WIN: "The Rock" has gone through some rocky moments since the Tua ripoff. He lost spectacularly to Oleg Maskaev in November '99, but bounced back with a rousing kayo of Corrie Sanders, and currently seems to be fighting as well as ever. Tua, on the other hand, grew fat, both figuratively and literally, feasting on no-hopers prior to the Lewis letdown. If there's a next time, Rahman finishes what he started and outpoints the Samoan slugger.

FERNANDO VARGAS vs. WINKY WRIGHT

Vargas, pictured landing a right against Trinidad, has some unfinished business with Wright (inset)

WHAT HAPPENED THE FIRST TIME: Nobody looks good against Wright, not even the trio of men who (officially, at least) beat him. Vargas was no exception. Even though the then-IBF 154-pound titlist claimed he was preoccupied with personal problems, Wright is the kind of clever, ballsy southpaw who can give anyone fits under the best of circumstances.

Wright's footwork, southpaw jabs, and occasional combinations made life thoroughly miserable for the champion. Many rounds were close, but even when Vargas succeeded in forcing Wright into exchanges, the challenger more than held his own.

Vargas, making his third title defense, staged a strong rally in the 10th, only to have Wright outfight him in the bruising 11th. Wright made a major mistake by coasting in the 12th, but still seemed to have done enough to score an upset. The official judges, however, thought otherwise, and the majority decision went to Vargas by tallies of 116-112, 115-113, 114-114.

WHY WE WANT A REMATCH: Why not? It was an excellent fight that resulted in a highly questionable decision, just the sort of bout that cries out for an encore.

CHANCE OF IT HAPPENING: Since losing the IBF belt to Trinidad, Vargas has indicated that he'll go after WBC 154-pound titlist Francisco Castillejo. That's a match "Ferocious Fernando" should be able to win, and if and when he does, his first logical challenger would be Wright.

Sadly, logic seldom governs the world of boxing, and the guess here is that Vargas will avoid Wright unless there's some sort of public groundswell in support of the rematch. And when's the last time a significant number of boxing fans got behind a cutie with a modest knockout percentage?

Sorry, Winky, but your best bet is to try and win one of the titles Trinidad will vacate when he moves up to middleweight.

WHO WILL WIN: If, on the other hand, Vargas tries to regain some of the prestige by fighting Wright again, he'll probably win without controversy this time. Since their first meeting, Vargas has gained considerable experience against Ike Quartey and Trinidad, and unless he's psychologically damaged by the Trinidad hammering, should now be able to register a clear-cut victory.

PAULIE AYALA vs. JOHNNY TAPIA III

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Would the third time be a charm for Tapia?

WHAT HAPPENED THE FIRST TIME: In this case, it's a matter of what happened the first *two* times. The initial war between this pair was so special, it was selected as THE RING's 1999's Fight of the Year, and even though the '00 rematch wasn't quite as good, it was still an exciting, give-and-take shootout. There's obviously something about the combination of styles of Tapia and Ayala that makes great fights. One factor that contributes toward making them such a superb pairing is the fact that neither is a huge puncher, which leads to the sort of electrifying exchanges that have highlighted their first two encounters. If either one had a bigger punch or a weaker chin, there probably wouldn't have been a second fight.

WHY WE WANT A REMATCH: To start with, a third meeting practically guarantees another corker. Beyond that, however, is Tapia's contention that the judges ripped him off both times. Tapia blamed Ayala's promoter, Bob Arum, but regardless of whether or not there's any basis for his accusation, there's no question that both fights were extremely close. There were few dissenters, outside of Team Tapia, the first time, but an awful lot of impartial observers thought Tapia should have gotten the nod in the rematch.

CHANCE OF IT HAPPENING: Ayala has said he'd be happy to fight Tapia again, but only if he calls the shots. WBA bantam boss Ayala made a number of concessions prior to the second fight, including fighting at a catchweight of 124 pounds and taking the short end of the purse money. Naturally, Tapia, like every other fighter weighing anywhere near 126 pounds, wants a crack at Naseem Hamed, but if he can't get one, another chance against the only man to beat him as a pro might prove too tempting to pass up. If they do get it on again, it doesn't look like it's going to be right away. Ayala has a date with WBA super bantam boss Bones Adams in the works, and that's no easy assignment.

WHO WILL WIN: Tapia was generally in charge when he boxed on the outside, but the persistent Ayala has a way of luring him into the trenches, where the younger man customarily had the advantage. If Tapia can avoid repeating this mistake, he can win a third encounter by a large enough margin to actually get the decision, particularly if Ayala has a draining encounter with Adams in the meantime.

IRENE PACHECO vs. HAWK MAKEPULA

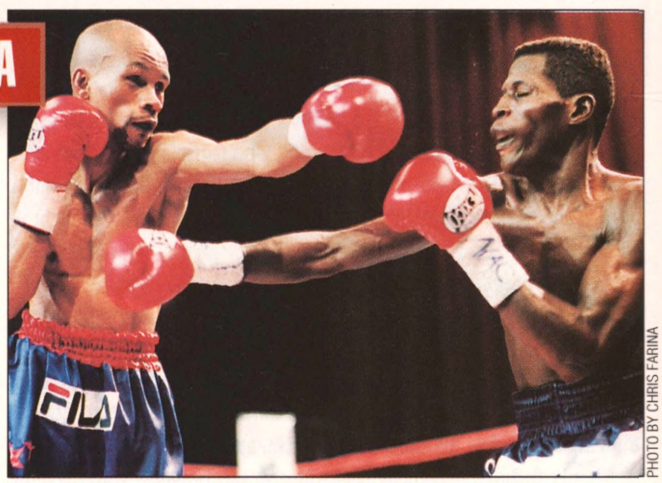


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Makepula and Pacheco have already agreed to do it again

WHAT HAPPENED THE FIRST TIME: This international matchup between a Colombian champion and a South African challenger got more attention than usual because it was held in Las Vegas the night before Lewis-Tua and was televised on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*.

Defending IBF flyweight champion Pacheco fell behind early as the diminutive Makepula darted in and out, scoring with clean punches, some of which snapped Pacheco's head back. But the challenger failed to follow up and allowed Pacheco to work his way back into the fight the second half. Pacheco is very strong for a 112-pounder, and his bodyshots seemed to take some of the steam out of his challenger, allowing the champ to sweep the last three rounds on the cards of all three judges.

Although Makepula finished the fight with his face badly lumped up, most of the media, including THE RING, thought that his early lead was big enough to carry him to the title. The official judges, however, disagreed, and made Pacheco the winner via majority decision. Al Siciliano's 114-114 was a reasonable enough score, but Doug Tucker's 117-111 and Melvina Lathan's 118-110 were way off the mark.

WHY WE WANT A REMATCH: True, this is not as high-profile as the other fights included in this article, but still demands a rematch. Moreover, it's a good idea to acquaint American fans with this pair, especially with Wisconsin's Eric Morel holding the WBA belt.

CHANCE OF IT HAPPENING: Excellent. According to CKP matchmaker Eric Bottjer, speaking in mid-January, both parties have agreed to the rematch, but no date or site had been set as of press time.

WHO WILL WIN: Pacheco seemed strangely listless against Makepula the first time, especially compared to his previous fight, an emphatic 11th-round knockout of Pedro Pena. Makepula's speed and skills had something to do with that, but it could also be that the 30-year-old Pacheco is struggling to make the 112-pound division limit. Whatever the case, look for a determined Makepula to stay busier the second half and take a decision close enough to warrant a rubber match.

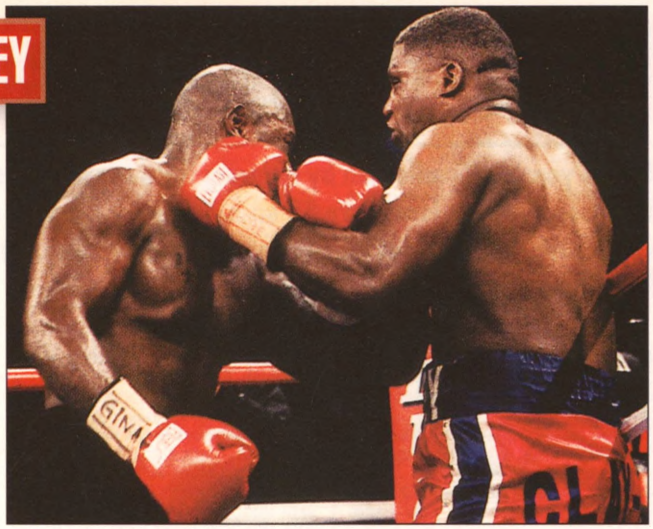
CLIFF ETIENNE vs. LAWRENCE CLAY-BEY

WHAT HAPPENED THE FIRST TIME: These guys stole the show from Lewis and Tua—that's what.

Even though both men came into the fight undefeated, Etienne was the hot fighter, fresh off impressive *KO Nation* victories against Lamon Brewster and Cliff Couser. Clay-Bey was still struggling to get his career rolling after numerous injury-induced layoffs. As expected, "The Black Rhino" attacked from bell to bell and kept his arms churning throughout. What was unexpected was how bitterly Clay-Bey fought back, coming off the ropes with scorching barrages on numerous occasions, usually just when it looked like he was about to be overwhelmed. The unanimous 10-round verdict in Etienne's favor was well deserved, but Clay-Bey shared in the standing ovation the capacity crowd at the Mandalay Bay Event Center gave the fight at the sound of the final bell.

WHY WE WANT A REMATCH: It was the best heavyweight fight of 2000.

CHANCE OF IT HAPPENING: HBO definitely sounds interested. Vice President of Programming Kery Davis said he thought Etienne-Clay-Bey was the "best heavyweight fight since Derrick Jefferson-Maurice Harris" and that he would "certainly consider a rematch." A lot depends on what other offers the pair gets. Even the most resilient of fighters can only withstand so many fights like their first punchfest, so it's wise to parcel them out judiciously. But if the best way to advance their careers is a rematch, we might be lucky enough to see them go at it again.



Clay-Bey comes off the ropes with a left hook

WHO WILL WIN: Everything hinges on whether or not Clay-Bey can stay off the ropes. When he used his legs and kept the action in center ring, the former Olympian was in charge. The problem was that he could only manage to do so for short spurts. The rest of the time, he had his back to the ropes, sucking up powershots from the relentless Etienne. It is virtually impossible to achieve the kind of shape you need to beat a hard-charger such as Etienne when you've had as many layoffs as Clay-Bey. But providing he can have a couple conditioning fights against decent competition first, Clay-Bey has proven he has the skills and guts to tame The Rhino.

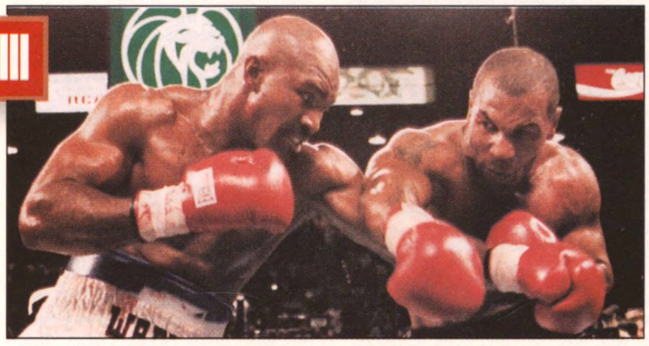
EVANDER HOLYFIELD vs. MIKE TYSON III

WHAT HAPPENED THE FIRST TIME: A brief recap for those who have been totally out of touch the last five years: In November 1996, "The Real Deal" TKO'd Tyson in a major upset. In the June '97 rematch, Tyson was DQ'd at the end of the third round for biting Holyfield on both ears, a foul so horrific, Iron Mike was fined $3-million and lost his boxing license for a year.

WHY WE WANT A REMATCH: This is more a case of being grateful for what we get, rather than really wanting it. Tyson-Lewis is the hottest fight in the heavyweight division right now, but even though the corporate logjam between HBO/TVKO-Showtime/SET shows signs of breaking up, Holyfield-Tyson III is still an easier match to make. Besides, their first two fights produced such astonishing results, the third is practically guaranteed to be another unforgettable happening, even if both guys are now fighting from memory.

CHANCE OF IT HAPPENING: If the HBO-Showtime dispute is quickly resolved and all parties are willing, Lewis-Tyson could sink this one. But if there's any further hitches, Holyfield-Tyson III will be the next big PPV event, providing Holyfield beats John Ruiz in their March 2001 rematch, and does so in a much more convincing fashion than he did in August '00.

Under those circumstances, Holyfield-Tyson III will be darn near as big as Lewis-Tyson, and when you consider that Holyfield-Tyson II remains the highest-grossing pay-per-view event in history, it's a no-brainer.



Holyfield vs. Tyson: Once more for old times' sake

WHO WILL WIN: Although Holyfield was closer to his prime than Tyson was the first time they fought, that situation may have reversed itself by now. Tyson seems to have regained a degree of his old form, albeit against easy opposition. Holyfield, on the other hand, hasn't looked good since knocking out Michael Moorer in November '97, and has been in more punishing battles than Tyson since they last met. In a way, Tyson's layoffs, due to jail time and the suspension of his Nevada boxing license, have helped preserve his body.

Even so, there are those who claim that Holyfield has Tyson's number, and no matter how many times they fight, Commander Vander will prevail. Maybe, but they used to say the same thing about Ezzard Charles and Jersey Joe Walcott, until their third fight, when Walcott finally figured out a way to win. Tyson also does better in his third fight with Holyfield, winning a close, hard-fought decision. Ironically, the margin of victory is the one point Holyfield is penalized for butting. ■

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June 1986: Barry's Back In The USA: McGuigan Breathes A Breath Of Fresh Air Into American Fight Scene. Plus: Bobby Czyz, Robbie Sims, Qawi-Holyfield preview, Berbick-Thomas, Bruno-Coetzee.

July 1986: Spinks-Holmes II: Who Really Won? Plus: Frank Bruno, Richie Sandoval, Kevin Watts, Tyson-Tillis, Boza-Edwards-Alli, Johnson-Burns.

Aug. 1986: Is Sugar Ray Still Sweet? Plus: Lloyd Honeyghan, Tyson-Green, Cooney-Gregg, Hall of Fame (Eder Jofre, Benny Lynch, Bud Taylor, Sam McVey, Nat Langham, John Chambers), Bernardo Pinango.

Sept. 1986: Gerry Cooney vs. Mike Tyson: Who Would Win? Plus: Cruz-McGuigan, Hearns-Medal, Tyson-Gross, Sims-Duran.

Dec. 1986: The Weekend That Shook The Boxing World. Rosario-Bramble & Honeyghan-Curry. Plus: Butch Lewis interview, Buster Drayton, Hector Camacho, Jake LaMotta.

April 1987: Hagler-Leonard Souvenir Issue. Plus: Czyz, Orlando Canizales, Mugabi-Thomas, Biggs-Snipes, Chavez-LaPorte, Bonecrusher-Witherspoon II, Haugen-Paul.

May 1987: Mike Tyson: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Year-end awards, *The Ring* annual ratings, Louie Espinoza, Herol Graham.

June 1987: Vinny Paz: Phenom Or Phony? Plus: Tyson-Bonecrusher, Mark Breland, Brian Mitchell, Holyfield, Czyz-Edwards, Olajide-Lee, Curry-Montgomery.

July 1987: Spinks-Cooney: The Fight That Refused To Die. Plus: The new *Ring* ratings, Terry Marsh, George Foreman's return, Khaosai Galaxy, Hearns-Andries, Whitaker-Mayweather.

Aug. 1987: Sugar Ray: Still In Style. Plus: Leonard-Hagler, all-time heavyweight ratings, Czyz-MacDonald, Camacho-Davis.

Sept. 1987: Michael Olajide: The Look Of The Future? Plus: Tyson-Thomas, Jeff Fenech, middleweight muddle, Tsuyoshi Hamada, Juan Roldan, Harold Knight.

Nov. 1987: Tyson Wins Heavyweight Triple Crown. Plus: McCallum-Curry, Carlos Monzon interview, triple champions, Orlin & Terry Norris, Ramirez-Alli, Fenech-Richardson, Matthew Hilton.

Dec. 1987: Spinks & Lewis: Boxing's Beastie Boys. Plus: Starling-Breland, Ramzi Hassan, Honeyghan-Hatcher, Holyfield-Ocasio.

Jan. 1988: Darrin Van Horn-Million Dollar Baby? Plus: Evander Holyfield, Hill-Stewart, Juan Coggi, great hookers, AIDS.

Feb. 1988: Gold Outshines Glitter: Tate Tops Olajide. Plus: Tyson-Biggs, Kalambay-Barkley, Hearns-Roldan, fights we'd like to see.

April 1988: Evander Holyfield: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Special year-end awards, Holyfield-Qawi II, Foreman-Sekorski, Hill-Angulo.

May 1988: George Foreman: "I Can Beat Tyson." Plus: Tyson-Holmes, Jesse Benavides, Showtime, no-knockout artists.

Aug. 1988: Julio Cesar Chavez: The Kid From Culiacan. Plus: Holyfield, bad decisions, Lockridge-Knight, Starling-Breland II, Brown-Trice, Haugen-Santana.

Sept. 1988: Sugar Ray: Here He Comes Again! Plus: Andries-Czyz, Kid Chocolate, Don Dunphy, Don Lalonde.

Oct. 1988: Mike Tyson: What Price Glory? Plus: Tyson-Spinks, Hearns-Barkley, Davey Moore.

Nov. 1988: Donny Lalonde: "Sugar Ray is Out Of His Mind!" Plus: Hall of Fame selections (Carlos Ortiz, Joe Brown, Billy Graham, Cus D'Amato, Jimmy Jacobs), Nunn-Tate, Molinares-Starling, Honeyghan-Chung, '88 Olympians.

Jan. 1989: Meldrick Taylor: Philly Phenom. Plus: Marvin Hagler, Alex Wallau, Taylor-McGirt, Olympic results.

Feb. 1989: Julio Cesar Chavez. Plus: Chavez-Ramirez, all-time lightweight ratings, Louie Espinoza, Simon Brown, Roger Mayweather.

March 1989: Hearns Next For Sugar Ray? Plus: Leonard-Lalonde, Prince Charles Williams, Hearns-Kinchen, Nunn-Roldan, Hines-Hilton.

May 1989: The Best Of '88. Plus: Year-end awards, Evander Holyfield, Pryor-Morales, Fenech-Navarro.

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Feb. 1990: Mike Tyson: Riddick Bowe & Ray Mercer Take Aim. Plus: Bobby Czyz, Gerry Cooney, Chuck Wepner, Antonio Esparragoza, Roman-Laciar.

March 1990: The '80s—Great Fights, Great Fighters (color). Plus: Jeff Harding, Evander Holyfield, Pete Rademacher, Sharkey-McCoy.

April 1990: Pernell Whitaker: Fighter Of The Year (color). Plus: Tiger Flowers, Duran-Leonard, Chavez-Taylor preview, Jorge Paez, Ali-Cooper.

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July 1991: Tyson's Title Hopes: He Ain't What He Used To Be...But It's Not Gonna Matter. Plus: Eusebio Pedroza, Myung Woo Yuh, Willie Meehan, Hearns-Hill preview, computer junior welterweight tournament, Gomez-Fenech, controversial heavyweight finishes (color).

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'40s LIGHT HEAVY HENRY HALL

The Man Who Outsmarted Ancient Archie

PHOTO BY PETE EHRMANN

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By Pete Ehrmann

In William Hall's Milwaukee, Wisconsin, home there are no clues as to the man he was in a previous life. The walls have no photos of him with Archie Moore, Joe Louis, or Ezzard Charles. Hall doesn't even have a scrapbook that chronicles the almost 20-year career that made him, over a half-century ago, one of the best light heavyweight boxers of his time.

"I never was too crazy about saving all those scraps," said Hall, now 78. "I got into it just to travel. I knew if I did pretty good fighting, I'd get to travel."

Fighting as Henry Hall, he traveled far and in some fast company, getting ranked second in the world at 175 pounds, splitting two bouts with the legendary Moore, and fighting exhibitions with heavyweight champions Louis and Charles. But like too many other talented black fighters of his era, Hall fought all over the globe without ever getting an opportunity to rule it as champion.

"You had to pull a lot of tricks to beat me," he said, "and they wanted easier fights."

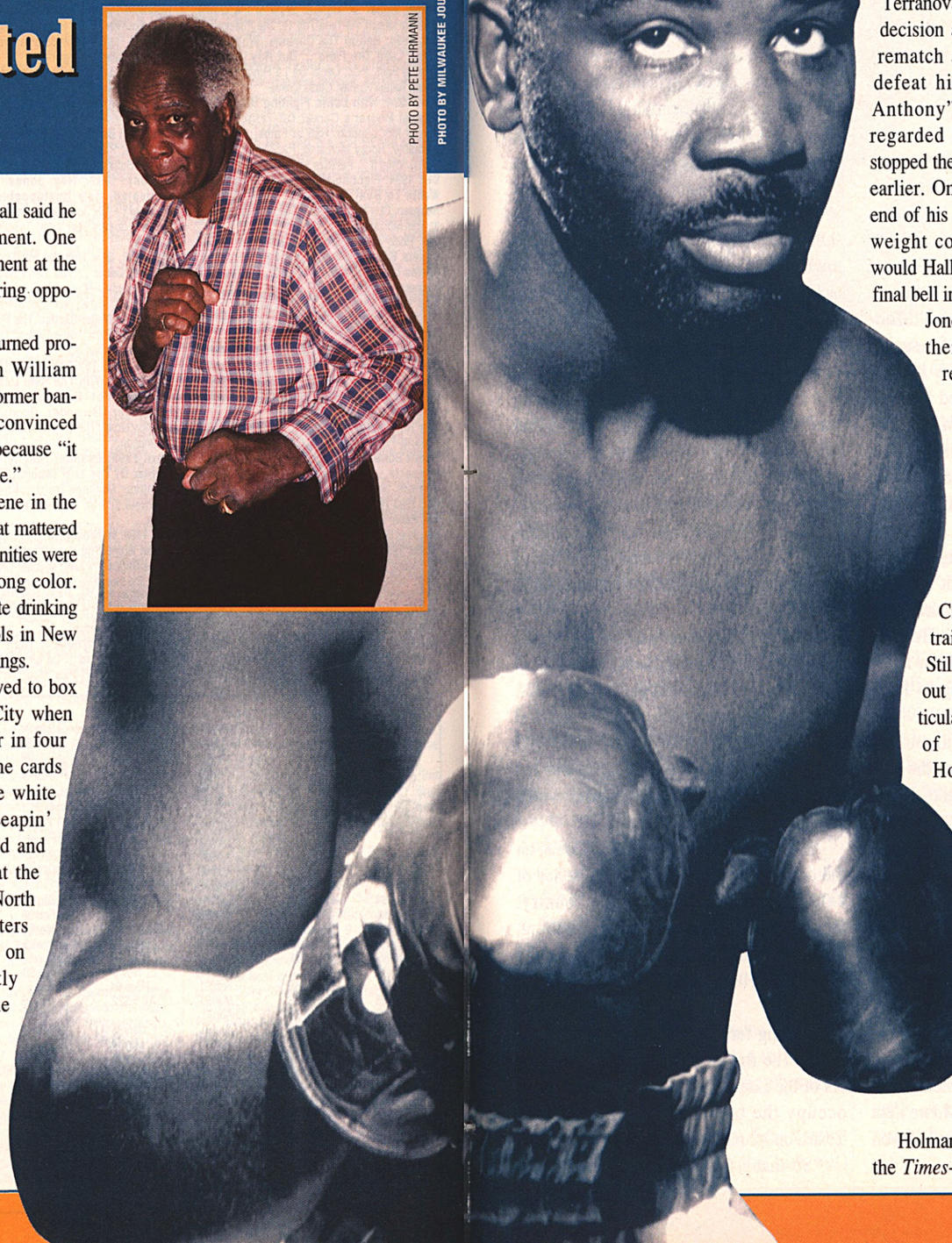
He was born in Napoleanville, Louisiana, and moved as a boy to New Orleans. Hall's father was a good street-fighter—"Most every man he hit went down"—but fighting wasn't for Hall until one day when he was 17 and headed for the Palace Theater to see a movie. On the way there, he passed the Rampart Street Gym, where some amateur bouts were going on.

"Instead of going to the Palace, I'll go here for a little entertainment," Hall said he decided on the spur of the moment. One week later, he *was* the entertainment at the Rampart, knocking out his first ring opponent in two rounds.

After six amateur fights, he turned professional in 1942. That's when William Hall disappeared. His manager, former bantamweight star Johnny Fissie, convinced him to call himself Henry Hall because "it sounded more like a sporting name."

But even on the sporting scene in the South of that time, it was color that mattered most and determined what opportunities were available. And Hall was the wrong color. Black people not only had separate drinking fountains, bathrooms, and schools in New Orleans, but also separate boxing rings.

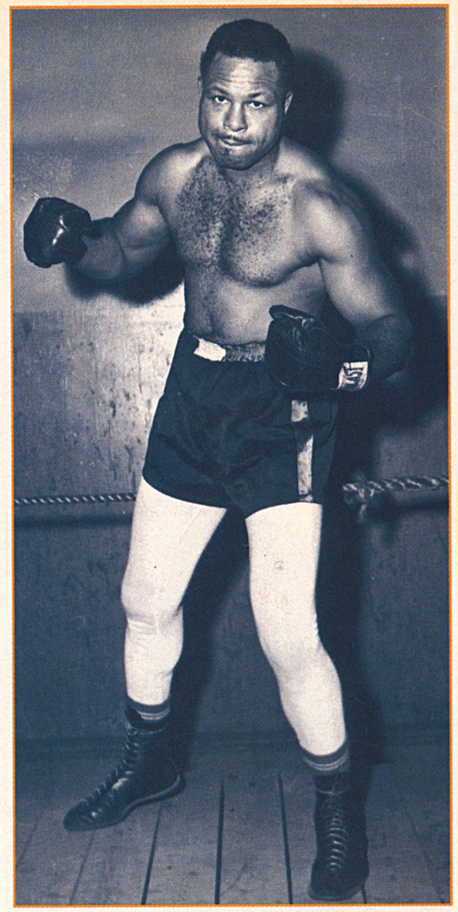
Black fighters were not allowed to box white fighters in the Crescent City when Hall knocked out Willie Butler in four rounds in his first pro bout. The cards were strictly segregated. While white boxers fought on promoter "Leapin' Lou" Messina's well-publicized and reported cards every Monday at the Coliseum Arena on Conti and North Roman Streets, the black fighters had their night at the Coliseum on Fridays. The races were strictly segregated on both sides of the ropes. There was a special section for blacks at the white cards, and vice versa.



Then and now: Former light heavyweight contender Hall as he looked in the prime of his career and as he looks today, still an active, physically impressive figure at the age of 78.

Defeated only once in 16 fights, Hall was anointed by the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* as the "best prospect in years" when he headed Messina's "Negro fistic card" at the Coliseum on October 20, 1944, against Al Stephany, a New Yorker and stablemate of ex-featherweight champion Phil Terranova. Hall won the 10-round decision and was rewarded with a rematch against the only man to defeat him to that point. "Mad Anthony" Jones, another highly regarded light heavyweight, had stopped the inexperienced Hall a year earlier. Only one other time, at the end of his career and against heavyweight contender Pat McMurtry, would Hall not be around to hear the final bell in a fight.

Jones won a tight decision in their rematch, but Hall rebounded with five wins and a draw before the man who wanted to travel as much as fight finally hit the road and headed north, where the segregation wasn't quite as encompassing as in Dixie.

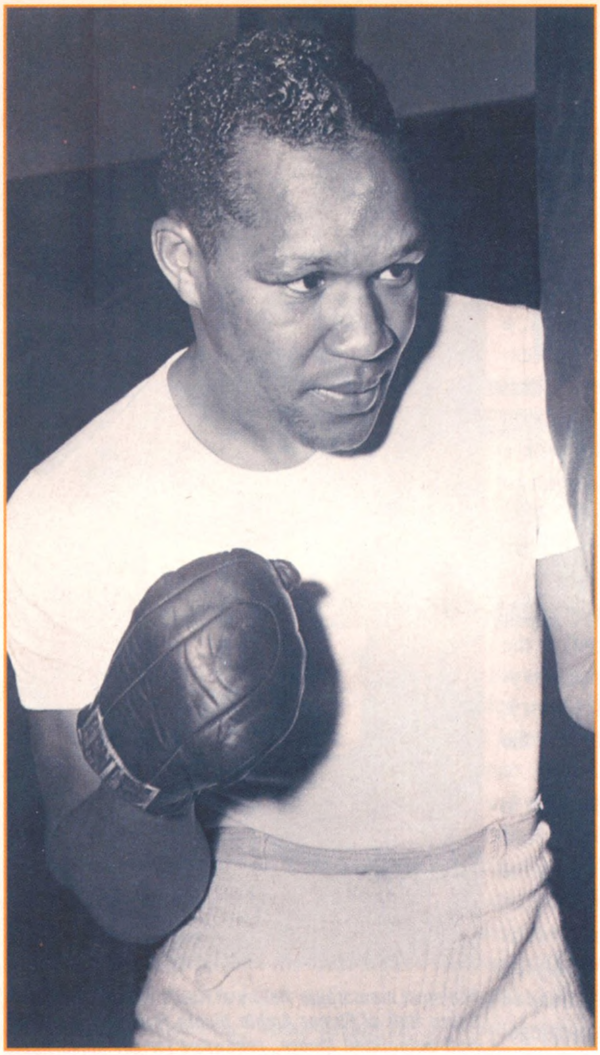


The most memorable victory of Hall's career came over future Hall of Famer Archie Moore (pictured) in 1948. Hall outpointed Moore, renowned for his cleverness, with the help of one of boxing's oldest tricks.

Headquartering in New York City in the summer of '46, Hall trained at the racial melting pot of Stillman's Gym and fought throughout the Northeast. He became a particular favorite in the boxing hotbeds of Newark, New Jersey, and Holyoke, Massachusetts. Hall didn't lose a fight that year, but in January '47, he dropped decisions to contenders Billy Grant and Bert Lytell. He beat Grant in a 12-round return match, and on March 14 returned home to New Orleans for a bout with another superb black fighter who was even better known in his hometown than Hall himself.

Holman Williams of Detroit was, even the *Times-Picayune* admitted, "one of the most remarkable pugilists of the past 20 years." Twelve years earlier, Williams had come to New Orleans for the first time and trounced local star Wesley Farrell. Said the newspaper, "He has been the idol of the Negro boxing fans here ever since. A fighter, white or black, has to have ability and color to please the fans here in repeaters. Williams has fought 32 fights in New Orleans rings for a total of 333 rounds—a record for a visiting fighter."

His fight with Hall was played up in the press as teacher vs. pupil. Five years before, when Hall was just getting started, Williams "gave him a break … and helped him on his way up from the preliminary ranks." But while acknowledging Hall as "the first local Negro to reach main bout class since Battling Owens and Harry Wills," more than a decade earlier, the press put the odds at 2-1 that Professor Williams would administer a flunking grade to the hometown fighter.



Another of Hall's famous opponents was Holman Williams, who was just as popular in Hall's hometown of New Orleans as Hall was. They fought a 10-round draw in their first bout, but Hall dropped a decision to the smooth-boxing Williams in the rematch.

The white and black spectators sitting in their segregated places at the Coliseum saw a terrific fight. The smooth, counter-punching Williams held sway for the first five rounds, but then Hall started to reach him repeatedly with right uppercuts. The decision after 10 rounds was a draw, which may have had less to do with any home-town bias on the part of the officials than "Leapin' Lou's" desire to wring an even bigger gate out of the rematch. When they fought the second time, two weeks later, school was back in session, with Williams utilizing his own right uppercut to win a unanimous decision.

"He was a slick, really good middleweight," said Hall. "Very smooth."

In his long career, Williams had been stopped only twice. Once by the great uncrowned champion, Charley Burley, and the other time by Hall's next opponent in New Orleans.

"Archie Moore was just about the best," Hall said. "He could turn up the heat just about any time he wanted. He was just naturally clever, with all kinds of tricks."

But in their 10-rounder on October 15, 1948, it was a trick by Hall that started the then-fifth ranked Moore on his way to a startling upset defeat at the Coliseum Arena.

One of the cagiest practitioners in ring history, renowned for luring many a smart fighter to his doom, it is almost impossible to imagine boxing's famed "Mongoose" falling for such a thing, but here it is in print as reported by Jesse A. Linthicum in *The Baltimore Sun*: "In an early round, Hall stepped back and remarked to Archie: 'You better tie your shoe string!' Moore looked down at his feet, and Hall sent a crackling right from the floor to Archie's jaw. Hall went on to win a 10-round decision, Moore failing to fully recover."

More than 52 years later, Hall recalled that punch with a smile as wide as the arch of the right hand he threw that night.

"It was bolo," he said.

That wasn't all there was to it, of course. Two rounds were taken away from the increasingly frustrated Moore late in the fight for punching low and butting. The future Hall of Famer, reported the *Times-Picayune*, "seemed content to wait for a pot-shot kayo punch to land on Hall, and never had the opportunity to connect solidly. Hall kept right on top of Moore throughout the 10 rounds to gain the decision."

A month later in Baltimore, Moore kept his eyes, punches, and head all up and won a unanimous verdict in a rematch.

Yet another outstanding black fighter in the '40s was Bert Lytell, who was called "The Chocolate Kid." His record included wins over Holman Williams, Cocoa Kid (Louis Cocoa), and even Burley. In '47, Lytell took all 10 rounds from Hall in their Holyoke fight. But in February '49, they fought a draw, and after that Hall won successive decisions over Lytell, and then snuffed feared bomb-thrower Bob Satterfield in four rounds to reach the number-two spot in the 175-pound rankings.

"The knockout, added to two impressive triumphs over Lytell, puts Hall in a strategic position nationally," said *The Milwaukee Journal* after the Satterfield fight. "He was ranked right behind champion Freddie Mills of England and his two leading contenders, the veteran Gus Lesnevich and Archie Moore, before he enhanced his ring record at Satterfield's expense. As a result, the shifty and sharp-hitting southern Negro left town looking for Moore, and willing to tackle any challenger standing between him and the title."

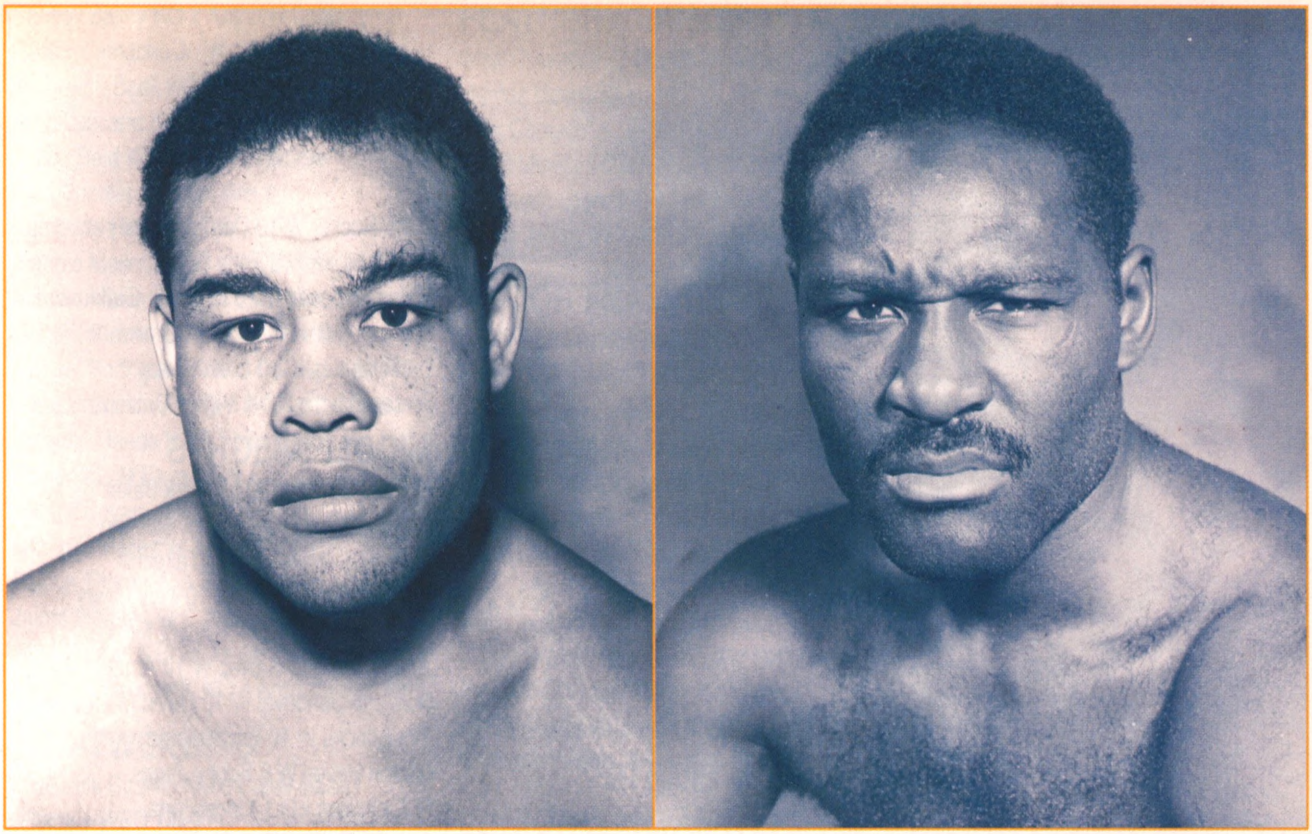
But all of a sudden, everything went south—as in purgatory, not New Orleans—in a hurry, and what happened in the ring was the least of it. Between June 3 and August 11 of '49, Hall dropped five straight decisions, including a pair of 10-rounders to future light heavyweight champion Harold Johnson. The contender who one sportswriter had said "moves around on a pair of winged feet" in the ring now appeared tired and ordinary.

It had nothing to do with boxing. Hall's wife, who'd enthusiastically encouraged and supported him throughout his career, was dying of cancer. His concentration and desire broken, Hall quit fighting to be with her. With one notable exception, he was out of the ring until 1951, following his wife's death.

Ex-heavyweight champion Joe Louis, on the comeback trail, was fighting a series of exhibition matches around the country. Only, "exhibitions didn't mean anything, because Louis liked to see you on the floor," said Hall. "That's the kind of fighter he was."

Looking for somebody who could stand up to "The Brown Bomber's" fire, promoters of the Louis tour prevailed upon Hall to occupy the opposite corner in Austin, Texas, on March 24, 1950.

"So many guys would get in the ring



Even though he was only a light heavyweight, Hall boxed exhibition bouts with heavyweight champions Joe Louis (left) and Ezzard Charles. Hall hung tough with Louis by recalling something Jack Johnson once observed about "The Brown Bomber."

with Louis afraid, and the first time they get hurt, they'd hit the canvas," Hall said. "He never hurt me. I remember that Jack Johnson mentioned once that Louis was easy to hit over his left shoulder."

Shooting right counters over the former champion's left jab, Hall not only lasted the distance, but looked so impressive doing it that when he got back into the ring a year later, it was for an exhibition against then-champion Ezzard Charles. Afterward, Charles told Hall: "You're slick and seem to know what's happening in the ring."

After two comeback fights, Hall went up against top heavyweight contender Rex Layne at the Kansas City Municipal Auditorium on June 21, 1961. Weighing 197 pounds, Layne, who'd beaten former champion Jersey Joe Walcott and had already signed to fight Rocky Marciano, had 19 pounds on Hall. Nevertheless, reported THE RING, "Hall used his superior speed and machine gun left to keep Layne off."

"They thought he was gonna knock me out, but he didn't come close to it," Hall recalled. "You could see his punches coming a mile away."

With Layne's big money fight against Marciano (who would knock him out) already locked in, the decision against Hall was equally forecastable. The 6,000 fans booed it loudly.

In the mid-'50s, Hall made Milwaukee his home base, remarrying and raising a family there while continuing to take whatever opportunities came along to indulge his traveling jones. He beat good heavyweights like Rusty Payne and Johnny Holman, and signed on as Canadian heavyweight champion Earl Walls' chief sparring partner for a chance to work the Great White North circuit. In 1955, Hall made it to Germany for two bouts, drawing with national champion Heinz Neuhaus in one of them and impressing Teutonic fans with his skills. Except for one, who advised Hall he "should be glad Hitler wasn't still living."

A title shot somewhere along the way would have been nice, but to a black man who grew up confined by strict boundaries arbitrarily determined by the color of his skin, the chance to see the big, wide world made it all worthwhile. The traveling finally stopped around 1962, when he put away his boxing gloves and became William Hall again. A lot of fights never made it to the record book, which shows Hall at 50-22-6 (18) with 1 no-contest.

One of Hall's sons loved his dad too much to try to follow in his footsteps, in case he couldn't measure up.

"I didn't want to do boxing," said Tom Hall, "because if I did poorly, they'd say, 'There's Henry Hall's son,' and it would reflect badly on my dad."

So Tom went into kickboxing instead, and won the professional heavyweight title in the mid-'80s. His father contributed some tips on punching, but the old contender's counsel was limited.

"When that kicking stuff gets in there, that throws me off," said the senior Hall.

Now less than two years from his 80th birthday, the still physically impressive and dignified Hall still works hard laying cement when the weather is warm, and gets his traveling in as afternoon bus driver for the grade school in his neighborhood.

"You like to keep busy; that's the best thing," said the journeyman. "Keep movin', like in the ring. Keep movin'."

And, of course, keep your shoe strings tied. ■

Pete Ehrmann is a freelance writer living in West Allis, Wisconsin, and a regular contributor to this magazine.

SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Chris Byrd W 10 David Vedder
Vitaly Klitschko KO 1 Orlin Norris
Michael Moorer KO 2 Terrance Lewis
Monte Barrett KO 9 Mario Cawley
Vaughn Bean W 10 Abdul Muhaymin
Obed Sullivan KO 4 Jesus Valadez
Jameel McCline KO 1 King Ipitan
Gerald Nobles W 10 Sedreck Fields
China Smith KO 1 Mike McGrady
Christophe Mendy W 10 Antoine Palatis
Benjamin Baker KO 4 Jason Nicholson
Malik Scott KO 3 Jackie Beard
Paolo Vidoz KO 1 Chris Morris
Michael Bennett KO 1 Andrew Hutchinson

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Johnny Nelson W 12 George Arias
Carl Thompson KO 5 Uriah Grant
Wayne Braithwaite KO 3 Wesley Martin
Louis Azille W 10 Ray Berry
Lou Del Valle KO 3 Earl Butler
Jason Robinson W 12 Saul Montana
Rudiger May W 12 Manuel Ossie
Jesper Kristiansen D 12 Turan Bagci
O'Neil Bell KO 10 James Walton
Sione Asipeli W 10 James Lester
Damon Reed KO 4 Stacy Goodson
Reggie Roberts W 10 Rudy Nix
Hector Sanjurjo KO 4 John Battle
Michael Simms KO 2 Marcus Harvey

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Reggie Johnson W 12 Chris Johnson
Julio Gonzalez W 12 Julian Letterlough
Byron Mitchell W 10 Anton Robinson
Jean Marc Mormeck KO 10
Juan Carlos Viloria
Peter Oboh KO 8 Chris Davies
Sergio Baez W 12 Hector Sotelo
Jeff Lacy KO 1 Jerald Lowe

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Markus Beyer W 10 Lloyd Bryan
Danilo Haussler W 12 Andrei Schkalikov
Anthony Hanshaw KO 5 Jose Spearman
Carmine Tufano W 10 Joey Hughes
Brian Magee W 12 Neil Linford
Dana Rucker W 10 Derrick Whitley
Will McIntyre W 8 Tony Pope
Miguel Jimenez KO 6 Eduardo Gutierrez
Shannon Miller KO 3 Aaron Norwood
Daniel Judah KO 3 Steve Detar
Jerson Ravelo KO 1 Miguel Guttierrez

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Howard Eastman KO 5 Mark Baker
Raymond Joval W 12 Sam Soliman
Kevin Palmer W 12 Seiji Takechi
Hector Camacho Sr. W 10 Troy Lowry
Dwain Williams KO 1 Vincent Moses
Juan Francisco Galvez W 10 Amadeo Pena
Norberto Sandoval W 10 David Mendez
Tim Shocks W 10 Eric Holland
Marlon Hayes W 8 Bobby Jones
R.J. Karsten KO 1 Vince Parra
Jermain Taylor KO 4 Chris Walsh

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Wilfredo Rivera W 8 Rob Bleakley
J.C. Candelo KO 4 Ron Johnson
Mamadou Thiam KO 8 Paolo Pizzamiglio
Santiago Samaniego W 10 Jason Papillion
Anthony Farnell W 12 Sergio Acuna
Richard Williams KO 3 Tony Badea
William Gare W 12 Mondli Mbonambi
Christophe Canclaux KO 10 Eric Daponte

WELTERWEIGHTS

Michele Orlando Tech. Win 8
Francesco Cioffi
Mike Stewart KO 4 Joshua Smith
Danny Perez W 10 Jose Luis Zaragoza
Rev Santillan W 12 Sukhyun Yun
Freddie Cadena KO 4 Alberto Santiago
Ricardo Mayorga KO 3 Elias Cruz
Chantiel Stanciel KO 3 Alexis Perez
John Molnar W 6 Eduardo Martinez
Terrance Cauthen KO 3 Gary Richardson
Johnny Rivera W 8 Bryon Mackie
Dante Craig KO 1 Darren Fallen

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Kostya Tszyu KO 7 Sharmba Mitchell
(Retains WBC Title; Wins WBA Title)
Zab Judah KO 10 Reggie Green
(Retains IBF Title)

Randall Bailey KO 2 Anthony Cobb
Hector Camacho Jr. W 12 Rocky Martinez
Jongkwon Baek KO 5 Saerit Saenkaew
Juan Lazcano KO 5 Vladimir Matkivsky
Teddy Reid W 10 Jesus Valverde
Fred Pendleton Tech. Win 9
Humberto Herrera
Antonio Mesquita KO 1 Javier Valadez
Antonio Mesquita KO 1 Juan Urzua
Manard Reed KO 2 Hector Ramirez
Manuel Rodriguez KO 10 Del Matchett
Eleazar Contreras KO 7 Fernando Mena
Hiroyuki Maeda KO 7 Feifong Kogure
Soulemain M'Baye KO 9
Mikhail Boyarskikh
Martin O'Malley W 8 Awel Abdulai
Patrick Thorns W 8 Calvin Green
Jaime Morales W 6 Jesse Varela
Juan Diaz W 6 Brad Jensen
Ricardo Williams Jr. KO 4 Anthony Simpkins

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Jose Luis Castillo KO 6 Cesar Bazan
(Retains WBC Title)
Angel Manfredy KO 4 Juan Polo-Perez
James Leija KO 3 Fred Ladd
Jesus Chavez KO 5 Benito Rodriguez
Julien Lorcy KO 6 Wilson Galli
Julio Alvarez Tech. Win 7 Saul Duran
Alex Trujillo KO 3 Gerardo Mijarbes
David Armstrong KO 10 Lemuel Nelson
Aldo Rios W 12 Walter Rodriguez
Daniel Attah W 8 Keylan Umaua-Luna
Edson Nascimento KO 1 Mariano Ramos
Bruno Wartelle KO 3 Damion Sutton
Zoltan Kalocsai W 8 Pascal Montulet
Julio Diaz W 10 Juan Angel Macias
Bryan Adams W 6 Bernard Harris
Justo Sencion W 8 John Trigg
Francisco Bojado KO 2 Detrick Castor

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Floyd Mayweather KO 10 Diego Corrales
(Retains WBC Title)
Joel Casamayor KO 9 Roberto Garcia
(Retains WBA Title)
Acelino Freitas KO 1 Orlando Soto
Augie Sanchez KO 4 Luisito Espinosa
Justin Juuko KO 9 Antonio Ramirez
Tontcho Tontchev KO 1 Anatoly Alexandrov
Tom Johnson W 10 David Turner
Carlos Hernandez KO 2 Sandro Marcos
Randy Suico KO 8 Dante Paulino

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Istvan Kovacs KO 12 Antonio Chelo Diaz
Marcos Licona W 10 Marcos Badillo
Felix Camacho W 8 Elias Juarez
David Murillo KO 1 Forvis Davis
Emanuel Lucero KO 4 Len Martinez
Rocky Juarez W 4 Pascali Adorno

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Willie Jorrin W 12 Oscar Larios
(Retains WBC Title)
Michael Brodie KO 4 Sergio Aguila
Israel Vazquez KO 3 Don Don Conception
Nedal Hussein KO 3 Delroy Price
Junichi Watanabe W 10 Setsuo Segawa
Fabio Oliva KO 1 Mario Cabello

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Ricky Gayamo KO 6 Jovi Chan
Ryuichi Minoriyama W 8 Joel Avila
Brahim Asloum KO 3 Aneure Cuevas
Clarence Vinson W 4 Adrian Valdez

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Shiro Yahiro KO 7
Panomdej Auyuthanakorn
Pedro Alcazar W 12 Sergio Perez
Martin Castillo KO 7 Omar Adorno
Jose Navarro W 4 Kenny Berrios

FLYWEIGHTS

Gerson Guerrero W 12 Evaristo Primero
Hussein Hussein KO 2 Stevie Quinn
Jesus Martinez W 10 Rocky Palma
Mzukisi Sikali W 10 Cyril Bellanger
Masaki Nakanuma W 10
Phanieng Okuda

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Yosam Choi KO 7 Saman Sorjaturong
(Retains WBC Title)
Jorge Arce KO 3 Jose Beltran
Fahlan Sakkreerin D 12 Andy Tabanas
Jovan Presvitero W 12
Roger Jack Maldecir

STRAWWEIGHTS

Jose Antonio Aguirre W 12 Manny Melchor
(Retains WBC Title)
Eric Ortiz KO 5 Rafael Orozco
Khulile Makeba W 12 Sizwe Sinyabi
Yutaka Niida KO 9 Makoto Suzuki
Isaac Bustos KO 1 Valentin Romero

RINGSIDE REPORTS

FIGHTER *of the* MONTH

Is it too soon to give out the Fighter of the Year belt? Perhaps, but if ever there was an early front-runner, it's WBC super featherweight champion Floyd Mayweather, who crushed Diego Corrales with possibly the most shockingly one-sided superfight performance since Joe Louis-Max Schmeling II.

Corrales seemed to have it all: height, reach, crippling two-fisted power, boxing skills, a solid chin—you name it. But Mayweather negated all of it with his speed and his preparation, peppering and frustrating "Chico" in the early rounds, then attacking and hurting him from the sixth round on. Three seventh-round knockdowns showed off Mayweather's often underrated power, and two more in the 10th convinced Corrales' corner to halt the action.

This was about as close to a perfect boxing display as most of us will ever see, and "Pretty Boy" is being rewarded handsomely for that perfection. No, we're not talking about his six-fight, $15-million deal from HBO (though that's not a bad little bonus); we're talking about Fighter of the Month honors. And around the end of December, we might be talking about something much bigger.

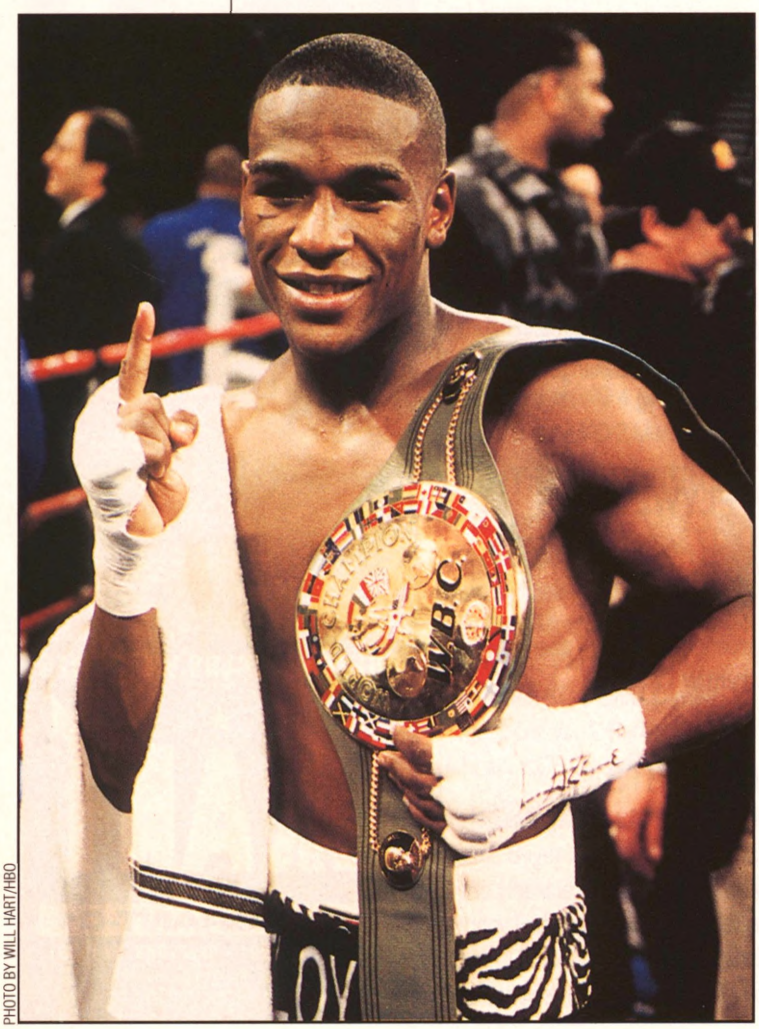


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

• • • •

Floyd Mayweather

Zab Judah KO 10 Reggie Green

Uncasville, Connecticut: Zab Judah was accompanied into the ring for his fourth IBF junior welterweight defense with a nifty, little friend at his side. No, your eyes weren't deceiving you on the Showtime telecast. That half-pint in the tan suit was actor Emmanuel Lewis, the midget who rose to fame playing the title role in the sitcom *Webster*.

Across the ring, however, in the black vinyl trunks, Reggie Green proved to be a much taller order. Whatever distinction Judah carried as the perceived favorite in a much-anticipated showdown with the winner of the fight between fellow 140-pound champions Kostya Tszyu and Sharmba Mitchell, it all quickly collapsed against the ropes, long before Green did at 1:29 of the 10th round.

Sure, Judah, 138¼, Brooklyn, New York, was clearly in control of the fight and was no doubt on route to a points decision even if he hadn't scored the violent stoppage. But the uninspiring route he traveled at the Mohegan Sun Casino before disposing of Green, 139, Clinton, Maryland, was a forgettable one, indeed.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Judah jars Green with a right hand

You know you're in trouble when an 81-year-old man is in dire need of more action. That's exactly what veteran referee Arthur Mercante Sr. (USA) demanded midway through the sixth round. Mercante, who was honored before the fight for entering his seventh decade of service, abruptly stepped in to stop the torrents of boos by jumpstarting the subdued action.

At the opening bell, Judah pranced out tentatively, slapping a lazy jab at Green's eyes, careful not to catch a right hand in return. Occasionally, Judah, 23, would slip in a sneaky uppercut or a slick right hand, but his performance was mostly muddled by inactivity. Not that Green's efforts were any more assertive. While Green, 32, was the busier fighter throughout the first six rounds, he relied on robotic left-right combinations, predictable shots that landed primarily on Judah's arms and gloves.

After Mercante's round six intervention, Judah finally began committing to his punches, wobbling Green at the end of the round and again at the close of the seventh. With Green beginning to swell slightly around the eyes, the end came crashing upon his skull midway through the 10th. A looping left hook to the head introduced Green to a circle of stars, and an ensuing one introduced him to the canvas below.

It was then—amid all the criticism for a slipshod performance—that Judah, 26-0 (20) with 1 no-contest, slammed home the most definitive point of the night: The IBF champ is a fantastic finisher. No sooner had Green, 33-5 (16), come off the canvas than he was on his way back down again, as a numbing left caught him flush on the chin, prompting referee Mercante to call it a night.

Promoters: Main Events, America Presents

(1-13-01)

Ted Bodenrader

Eric Morel W 12 Gilberto Keb-Baas

Madison, Wisconsin: Returning to his hometown and to the arena where he had captured the WBA flyweight belt five months earlier, the erratic Morel showed only flickers of the brilliance that marked his title win over Sornpichai Pisnurachank. Nevertheless, with an early knockdown and a couple of late point penalties against his challenger, Morel, 29-0 (16), did enough to win a clear-cut decision over the determined Keb-Baas, 17-7-1 (11), in his second title defense.

Boxing before a supportive crowd at the Alliant Energy Center, Morel, 112, Madison, Wisconsin, got off to an excellent start, jabbing effectively in the opening round and flooring Keb-Baas, 112, Mexico, with a quick barrage in the second. But when the challenger easily beat the count of referee Dick Bartman (USA), Morel did curiously little to follow up.

It was in the third that the Morel jab began to vanish, allowing Keb-Baas to get in close against the tall champion and make the bout competitive. Still, Morel wobbled him with an outstanding right-left combination late in the round, stealing the stanza. This pattern continued over the next several rounds—Keb-Baas working harder, Morel moving, picking his spots, and landing a jarring blow or two in each round—and depending on how the judges valued Keb-Baas' decent body work, most of the rounds could have gone either way.

Keb-Baas, 23, landed perhaps his best punch of the night in round eight, a flush right hand, but Morel came back with a right hand of his own. Keb-Baas fired back with a left hook, but then had his momentum stalled when Bartman penalized him for a borderline low blow. Morel had an excellent round in the ninth, fighting more aggressively and landing several hooks and uppercuts

that had the Mexican in trouble. The gutsy Keb-Baas rallied back in the 10th, but when another questionable low blow led Bartman to penalize him again in the 11th, the 25-year-old Morel's victory on the scorecards became certain. Judge Samuel Conde (Puerto Rico) scored it 117-109, James Boll (USA) saw it 117-110, and Guillermo Perez (Panama) had it 116-111.

Television: ESPN2
Promoter: Top Rank
(12-15-00)

Davey Hilton W 12 Dingaan Thobela

Montreal, Quebec: For a couple of flabby, over-the-hill warriors who in an ideal world would not be competing for anything called a "world" title, Hilton and Thobela put on a heck of a show before 9,569 screaming Canadians at the Molson Centre.

Thobela began the fight as the most unlikely champion of 2000; fighting 33 pounds above his prime weight and written off after a series of recent losses, the 34-year-old South African won the WBC super middleweight title with a one-punch, 12th-round knockout of heavily favored Glenn Catley in September. But by the end of the fight, Hilton may well have become boxing's most improbable titlist; he lost pitifully to Stephane Ouellet in his previous fight, trained for Thobela while living in a detox center, and knew that even if he won, he might never get a chance to defend the title because of looming sexual assault charges.

For all their collective shortcomings, Hilton and Thobela turned out to be very evenly matched, and their styles produced an excellent back-and-forth battle. Early on, it was Hilton, 160, who had the edge, blasting away to the champion's body with both hands throughout the first two rounds. Hilton rocked Thobela, 166, with a right hand in the third, but that seemed to ignite the South African, and he roared back with one surprisingly quick combination after another. The momentum swung constantly over the next several rounds, both men fighting in explosive spurts. Thobela did plenty of damage to the head with his uppercuts and right hands, while Hilton was relentless with his body attack, and also frequently came upstairs with telegraphed left hooks.

Hilton seemed to have a small lead through eight rounds, but in the ninth, the 37-year-old Montreal fighter became the first to show signs of fatigue. In the 10th, a weary Hilton was straying low with his bodyshots, though referee Elmo Adolph (USA) didn't take any points from him. Thobela, 40-8 (26), remained busy and seemed to really take over in the final two rounds, hurting Hilton, 39-2-3 (26), with a right along the ropes in the final stanza.

Both men flurried as the final seconds ticked down, and each believed they had done enough to win. But with the fight taking place in Hilton's hometown, it was fairly predictable which way the decision would go. Judge Oren Shellenberger (USA) scored it 115-113 for Thobela, but the two female judges, Julie Lederman (USA) and Barbara Perez (USA), both went for Hilton, by respective scores of 115-113 and a hard-to-comprehend 117-111.

Next for Hilton, provided he isn't in prison by the time this magazine comes out, is a defense against either Catley or fellow Canadian Eric Lucas. Thobela, who said afterward that he felt he was robbed, also remains in the picture and may get another shot.

Television: ESPN2
Promoter: InterBox
(12-15-00)

Paul Spadafora W 12 Billy Irwin

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Spadafora, the 25-year-old IBF lightweight champion, made it clear before his mandatory bout with Irwin that the tough Canadian was in for a shock. If Irwin was expecting to see the Spadafora who suffered two knockdowns at the hands of Victoriano Sosa or who squeaked out a win against Mike Griffith, he was going to be disappointed.

"This will be my best fight yet," said Spadafora, who would be making his fourth defense of the title. "I'm going back to my old style. Tommy [Yankello] is back with me and I'm stronger than I've ever been. Tell everyone to watch because it's going to be a great fight."

Well, it was for Spadafora, 32-0 (14). "The Pittsburgh Kid" dominated the 12-round bout so completely that it would have taken a Mother Teresa to find more than a couple of rounds to give to the moribund Irwin. The 32-year-old Irwin, 34-4 (24), normally an aggressive fighter with a big left hook, averaged only 29 punches thrown per round, landing only five of them on average.

Spadafora, 135, coming off a string of unimpressive performances, gave immediate notice that the defensive wizardry for which he has been noted was back. Moving, giving angles, throwing quick combinations and then dancing out of harm's way, Spadafora seemed to mesmerize Irwin, 134½, who did

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE

Hilton goes to the body en route to split decision over Thobela

next to nothing for the first two rounds.

In the third, Irwin attempted to open up, only to discover that when he did throw a punch, Spadafora slipped it and countered with harder, cleaner shots than when the champion was forced to lead. By the halfway mark, it was clear that Spadafora could not only outwork Irwin from the outside, but also beat him on the inside, where he was much quicker than the challenger. The only threat that Irwin posed in close was that of a headbutt, which actually occurred in the 10th round when the two fighters accidentally clashed heads. Irwin emerged with a cut high on his head, above his right ear.

In a one-sided bout almost bereft of compelling action, the 11th round finally saw an exchange of punches and had the 5,500 fans in attendance at the Lawrence Center screaming. Irwin nailed the local favorite with a hard right hand. Spadafora responded with a quick three-punch combination and followed with two hard, straight left hands. Irwin winged another right that landed flush, high on Spadafora's head. However, The Pittsburgh Kid returned to boxing and regained control of the round by utilizing his jab and movement.

With under 20 seconds left in the frame, referee Rick Steigerwald (USA), who had previously warned Spadafora twice for low blows, halted the contest and deducted a point from the champion after he landed another borderline shot. The champion was furious, voicing his outrage in his corner between rounds.

After a still angry Spadafora launched a blindingly fast head and body attack at the start of the 12th, he backed off and played for the remainder of the round. Irwin, clearly in need of a knockout, made little attempt to score one.

The official scoring—Kenneth Chevalier (USA) had it 117-110, Tony Wolfe (USA) scored it 118-109, and Gil Pasquale (USA) saw it 116-111—was generous in the eyes of many, including HBO's Julie Lederman, who had the score 119-108 for Spadafora, giving the champion a shutout aside from the penalty point.

Television: HBO
Promoter: Mike Acri
(12-16-00)
Jim Trunzo

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Woodhall and Calzaghe slug it out

Joe Calzaghe KO 10 Richie Woodhall

Sheffield, England: Reviving memories of the great middleweight and super middleweight bouts in Britain of recent vintage, Calzaghe and Woodhall served up a treat on a night marred by the horrifying injuries sustained by Paul Ingle in the chief support. Completely unaware of Ingle's fate, Calzaghe, 168, Wales, came through the best shots of former WBC super middleweight champion Woodhall, 167½, England, and eventually overpowered a foe who happens to be one of his best friends, at the Sheffield Arena.

Even through the buildup to the fight, Calzaghe and Woodhall's friendship held firm. Following one press conference, they set out together and had tea at a motorway service station. Calzaghe, after all, has much to thank Woodhall for. In 1999, just a couple of days before the Welshman fought another former WBC 168-pound titleholder, Robin Reid, he was saved by Woodhall from eating a spoonful of shredded glass that had somehow gotten into a bowl of ice cream he was eating. Not only might it have been his career that was saved, but quite possibly his life.

But when they finally went to war in the ring, there was no quarter given. Blow for blow, the momentum went to and fro, and until the fight approached its final stages, it really could have gone either way. Having impressed greatly in his previous outing against New Jersey's Omar Sheika, Calzaghe, 28, was desperate to claim another appealing and convincing victory with the possibility of Roy Jones coming back down to 168 pounds. Woodhall was put under severe pressure in the opening round, but he responded strongly in the second, and it became clear that the straightforward assignment many had foreseen for Calzaghe would not materialize.

To every right or left Calzaghe landed, Woodhall, 32, responded automatically, and they traded heavy blows. By the fourth, Woodhall was marked around the right eye and there was blood coming from his nose. But there was still no way he would give ground.

In the eighth, a right hand by Woodhall seemed to hurt Calzaghe, but it was in the ninth that the Welshman landed the decisive blows. A right and left in close hurt Woodhall, 26-3 (15), badly, and he went down almost in slow motion. The bell intervened, but several hard shots that got through at the start of the 10th prompted referee Roy Francis (England) to call a halt just 28 seconds into the round.

"It was a great fight, and I wouldn't have expected anything less from Richie," said Calzaghe, 30-0 (25). "Now I'd love to fight Roy Jones."

Television: Showtime
Promoter: Sports Network
(12-16-00)
Brian Doogan

Mbulelo Botile KO 12 Paul Ingle

Sheffield, England: Frank Maloney, who has managed the career of Ingle since he turned professional in 1993, was left to muse that he would have pulled his man out a week before the fight had he foreseen the tragedy that would unfold at the Sheffield Arena. A sharper, stronger Botile, 125, South Africa, completely dominated from the outset—only Ingle's courage keeping him in it—to claim the IBF featherweight title. But within minutes of being knocked out 20 seconds into the final round, Ingle, 125, England, lapsed deep into a more sinister state of unconsciousness, and the long battle to save his life began.

The days and weeks that followed were dominated by the age-old debate about boxing's legitimacy. Ingle staged a stirring recovery in the Royal Hallamshire Hospital following surgery to remove a blood clot from his brain *(see page 11 for more details)*, but the road ahead will be long and winding. Botile expressed his regret over the fate suffered by his foe, but in the ring he had been so much the better man that the result was inevitable from the middle rounds on. We just did not realize how damaging the result would be.

Ingle, 23-2 (16), had grown as a fighter after extending Naseem Hamed into the 11th round in April 1999, when only a pulverizing left hook by Hamed prevented a potential shock upset victory for Ingle. His title-winning effort against Mexican Manuel Medina was another gutsy effort, as was his first defense against New Yorker Junior Jones at Madison Square Garden. But in Ingle's second defense, former IBF bantamweight champion Botile, 27-1 (16), whose only defeat was to the brilliant Tim Austin when he lost that title, proved to be a fighter of pure class.

Botile's jab was razor sharp. Repeatedly it impacted against Ingle's face. A left hook hurt Ingle in the opening round, and a right staggered him as well. A hard left uppercut in the second did some damage, but most revealing of all was that when Ingle caught Botile solidly with a straight right midway through the round, the challenger did not as much as flinch. Ingle, 28, was just unable to dig down to turn the fight on its head, as Botile, also 28, kept doing a thoroughly professional job.

Near the end of the 11th, Ingle finally went down from a left hook, and the bell prevented further punishment. He responded to his cornermen during the interval, saying he knew he had to knock Botile out to win. But within 20 seconds of the final round, it was he who was dropped by another left hook, his head being caught on the bottom rope as he fell, and the nightmare unfolded.

The referee was Dave Parris (England).

Promoter: Sports Network

(12-16-00)

Brian Doogan

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/ALLSPORT

Ingle walks into a Botile left

Juan Carlos Gomez KO 10 Jorge Castro

Karlsruhe, Germany: There was little evidence to suggest at the end of another successful defense of the WBC cruiserweight title that Gomez, 189, Germany via Cuba, is about to be unseated any time soon from his position at the top of the division. Calmly and progressively, he outboxed former WBA middleweight champion Castro, 188, Argentina, before gently increasing the pressure to the point where the brave challenger could take no more. Over 8,000 people roared their approval for the adopted Cuban at the Grugahalle as he completed his ninth defense.

The 27-year-old southpaw champion put to good use his own pronounced physical advantages, and the outcome was never in any doubt. Only Castro's unchecked courage prevented an early finish. The jab was rarely out of his face, but he has not amassed a career record of 116-7-3 (78) for nothing. Wily use of his resources extended the fight toward a stage where the 33-year-old Argentine might actually have started to believe he could make it to the final bell, which would have been no mean feat.

As it was, Gomez, 32-0 (27), turned the screw sufficiently to force British referee Larry O'Connell's intervention in the 10th. Brave as the challenger was, he did not win a single round. He found Gomez an overwhelming presence, and penetrating the champion's guard was virtually beyond him. But his chin stood up to powerful straight lefts, hard hooks, and the steady succession of jabs that Gomez fired at will at the besieged South American.

At the end of the eighth, referee O'Connell consulted with the ringside physician over Castro's reduced state, and at the end of the ninth, he appeared to have terminated the bout after asking Castro if he wanted to continue. It was a language problem that had caused O'Connell to misunderstand Castro's intention to fight on, but it was the impossible problem of keeping Gomez at bay that finally forced the end. A big left to his exposed jaw put Castro

down, and though he climbed off the floor, the referee wisely waved it off at the 1:56 mark.

Promoter: Universum Box
(12-16-00)
Brian Doogan

Dariusz Michalczewski KO 7 Ka-dy King

Karlsruhe, Germany: Roy Jones may be perfectly justified in claiming supremacy over the world's light heavyweights, but the virtuoso WBC, WBA, and IBF champion is regarded with little more than disdain by Michalczewski. The Hamburg-based Pole is adamant that Jones cannot consider himself the division's undisputed ruler until he has met him. And he is convinced that he has what it takes to inflict the first real loss on a fighter whose one career blemish was on a disqualification loss to Montell Griffin, a man subsequently knocked out by both Jones in a rematch and, later, Michalczewski.

Impressive as Jones is, Michalczewski is unconvinced. Why is it, he asks, that the Pensacola, Florida, showman does not take his show on the road and fight him? Michalczewski is 43-0 (33). He has retained his lightly regarded WBO light heavyweight title 18 times, this defense against 34-year-old veteran King, 24-4 (17), at the Grugahalle providing yet another win that was as inevitable as his declaration afterward that the one who interests him in engagement more than any other is Jones. But the Polish-German star did take more shots to the head than is usually the case, and perhaps his mind was concentrated on more than King, and even Jones.

Lurid tales in gossip columns in recent months involving unsavory allegations have engulfed Michalczewski, whose wife recently left him. Inside the ropes is probably at present his safest haven, certainly against opponents like King.

The challenger from Detroit, Michigan, enjoyed moments of considerable success, especially in the early rounds when the face of Michalczewski, 175, became heavily marked. A clash of heads opened a cut over the Pole's right eyebrow, and he was not at all in a happy mood. But his strength of will and sheer physical power pulled him through the more uneasy interludes until he finally demonstrated his superiority over the tiring King, 175, in the seventh round. A right and left landed high on King's head and had him in desperate trouble, and with 28 seconds gone, referee Genaro Rodriguez (USA) stepped in and waved it over.

"I don't know what I have to do to persuade Roy Jones to fight me, maybe fall over a couple of times and look like I'm becoming worn out. I want him and he knows it," Michalczewski, 32, declared.

Promoter: Universum Box
(12-16-00)
Brian Doogan

Jose Luis Castillo KO 6 Cesar Bazan

Las Vegas, Nevada: Julio Cesar Chavez should've been there. He would've been proud of former sparring partner Castillo, 42-4-1 (38), who landed one of the most perfect punches you'll ever see—too bad Bazan didn't—in scoring a stoppage at 2:54 of the sixth at the MGM Grand Garden Arena to retain the WBC lightweight title for the second time.

Chavez was supposed to help work the corner, but he never surfaced. That was too bad, because Castillo, 135, Mexico, landed a flush uppercut to the chin that flipped the challenger in an exciting undercard fight beneath Floyd Mayweather-Diego Corrales.

"The uppercut he kayoed Bazan with was a beautiful punch," said HBO executive Kery Davis. "A fight between Castillo and Corrales would be a great one." Corrales, who was stopped by Mayweather for the WBC 130-pound title, still has a fight remaining on his contract with the network.

The former WBC lightweight champion, who upset Stevie Johnston more than two years ago, took advantage of his 6' height to open the fight, landing 45 of his 60 punches in the first round. Castillo, who won the title from Johnston—who had regained it in a rematch with Bazan—was a patient aggressor. He was content to give away the first two rounds, and lost them on all three judges' cards, as he stalked fellow Mexican Bazan, 135.

Bazan, 26, didn't sustain the jab long, and soon his instincts to brawl took over as he began sitting on right hands. He landed a fair share of them crisply on Castillo, 27, but the champion showed few ill effects.

By the fourth, it was evident that Castillo's punches carried more snap, but Bazan, being the proud warrior he is, continued to stand and trade. He landed a left and right uppercut on the inside and clearly stunned Castillo, who had a deep cut on his left eyelid

PHOTO BY TOM HAUCK/ALLSPORT

It was all over for Bazan after this spectacular uppercut

and a puffy right cheekbone, and followed it up with a stiff right hand and another uppercut.

Just when it seemed Bazan, 38-4-1 (26), was stealing the play, a short left hook dropped him on the seat of his pants in the fifth. As the round came to a close, there was a furious exchange, and Castillo walked into a big left hook that made him take a step back for the first time. Although Bazan was game, in the sixth round he ate one punch too many. Castillo stunned him with a straight right hand before feinting a jab—the lanky Bazan mistakenly bent at he waist—and turning it into a left uppercut.

Amazingly, Bazan stood up, but another furious exchange punctuated by a right hand forced referee Vic Drakulich (USA) to halt the contest.

Television: HBO
Promoter: Top Rank
(1-20-01)
Johnnie Whitehead

Sven Ottke W 12 Silvio Branco

Essen, Germany: Punching power may not be his forte, but Ottke, 167, Germany, has plenty of other qualities that have sustained his reign as IBF super middleweight titleholder through eight successful defenses. He never looked like dispatching of Branco, 166¼, Italy, via the quick route, but he was never in any real danger. The wide unanimous decision he claimed represented yet another satisfying night for the former Olympic champion, even if the spectacle was far from being aesthetically pleasing.

The Italian's camp disputed the verdict, but they did this more out of a stubborn refusal to face up to how unproductive much of their man's work was than out of having any legitimate cause for crying foul. Ottke's tactics of bulling his way in to unsettle the challenger were not likely to invite comparison with Sugar Ray Robinson, but they worked. Considering that his reputation as a puncher would not unduly worry your average paper bag, Ottke may be quite entitled to summon whatever alternative devices he believes are necessary to get the job done, and the Italians were unquestionably of the opinion that in this bout he really did.

Branco's promoter, Julio Spagnolli, was more realistic. "Silvio simply did not fight well. It was one of his worst fights," he said. "He had an opportunity here, but he did not make the most of it. He didn't do what he could have."

Ottke's work featured pushing, pulling, holding, and hitting with the inside of the glove, none of which will result in his fan base growing far beyond his home country, but none of which drew any penalty from German referee Arno Pokrandt, either. The tall, rangy Branco, 40-5-2 (25), held his own over the opening few rounds, jabbing and countering with some success. But over the middle rounds Ottke, 21-0 (2), assumed control, even though he never quite reached the level of dominance he might have been expected to. The 34-year-old Branco's long left occasionally caused Ottke to become frustrated, but he stuck to his task, firing in shots to the head and body of his opponent to close the fight in commanding fashion.

American judge Al Munoz scored it 116-112, Germany's Manfred Kuchler had it 117-111, and Italian Remigio Ruggeri saw it 117-111, all for the 33-year-old champion. THE RING scored 117-112 for Ottke.

Ottke could face Dana Rosenblatt next.
Promoter: Wilfred Sauerland
(12-16-00)
Brian Doogan

Joel Casamayor KO 9 Roberto Garcia

Las Vegas, Nevada: "Grandpa" Garcia got married in a Las Vegas casino wedding chapel on a Sunday morning. He would have loved to have brought a new world title belt to the ceremony with him. But while the ex-IBF junior lightweight champion made things interesting for a while, Casamayor still had enough to stop him and retain the WBA super featherweight title at the Texas Station Gambling Hall & Hotel.

Casamayor, 130, Miami, Florida, trailed on two of the three judges' cards at the time of the stoppage, which came at 1:14 of the ninth round. Judge Duane Ford (USA) had it 77-74 and Dave

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Ref Kenny Bayless signals the end for Garcia

Moretti had it 76-74, both for Garcia. Judge Guy Jutras (Canada) had it even, 76-76. THE RING card favored Casamayor, 76-74.

Garcia, 129½, Oxnard, California, said prior to the fight that he wouldn't try to brawl with the fast-handed Cuban. Instead, Garcia promised that he would box and move and would only trade when he had an advantage.

For the most part, that's what he did. Casamayor, 130, Miami, Florida, seemed indifferent at times during the first five rounds and was content to allow Garcia to pile up the points. Garcia wasn't doing anything exceptional, but he was scoring consistently with his jab and right hand early. Casamayor, though, said the slow start was all part of a plan. He had predicted a fourth-round stoppage, but said after the fight that that was a ploy.

"The plan for me was to have the fight go a few rounds," said Casamayor, 24-0 (15). "It's an old Cuban trick to say I'm going to knock him out inside of four rounds. I did that because I wanted to get him thinking. Then, I went after him."

He was exhorted to do so after the fifth round by his trainer, Joe Goossen. And as soon as the sixth began, Casamayor, 29, cracked Garcia, 25, with a straight left that wobbled the former champion's legs. But Casamayor, who was fighting dirty throughout, may have cost himself a shot at stopping the fight in the sixth. He elbowed Garcia during a clinch as Garcia was clearly in jeopardy of being stopped. Referee Kenny Bayless (USA) took a point away from Casamayor for the infraction. More importantly, it allowed Garcia to recover, which the champion was quick to note.

"I am unhappy they took away a point in the sixth round," Casamayor, making his second title defense, said. "He was going to get knocked out and they take a point from me."

Garcia gamely rallied to win the seventh and arguably the eighth. But Casamayor's left hand again found its mark in the ninth and put Garcia down twice. The second knockdown came after a succession of unanswered blows to the head, prompting Bayless to wave the bout off without counting.

Television: Showtime
Promoter: America Presents
(1-6-01)
Kevin Iole

Augie Sanchez KO 4 Luisito Espinosa

Las Vegas, Nevada: There was much prefight talk about how Sanchez would recover from the brutal knockout he suffered at the hands of Prince Naseem Hamed last August. In that bout, Sanchez was violently knocked down and out and had to be carried from the ring on a stretcher. In his first fight after that devastating finish, Sanchez, 127, Las Vegas, Nevada, was meeting Espinosa, 127½, Daly City, California, a two-time former world champion. To say the least, this was not your typical get-well comeback opponent.

In the first round, Sanchez hardly threw a punch, and didn't do much more for the first 90 seconds of the second round. But after that, Sanchez kicked it into gear and scored a stoppage of Espinosa nearly as brutal as the one "Kid Vegas" was dealt by Hamed.

Sanchez was clearly the stronger fighter and began landing his hard right hand consistently early in the third round. He used the right to put Espinosa down for the first time late in the third, and, for a while, it appeared Espinosa wouldn't last the round.

"I was surprised at how hard he hit," Espinosa said. "He is a strong guy."

Sanchez had all of his weapons working in the fourth and he nearly leaped off his stool to get at Espinosa. Sanchez dug a hook to the ribs and then followed it with a three-punch combination to the head that had Espinosa teetering. Sanchez then blistered Espinosa with a right uppercut. Espinosa staggered over to the ropes, barely putting up a defense, as Sanchez stood over him and whaled away with right hands. Referee Joe Cortez (USA) decided to stop the carnage at 1:36, just as Espinosa was dropping to a knee.

Sanchez, fighting in front of an enthusiastic hometown crowd at the Texas Station Gambling Hall & Hotel, said he was never concerned there would be a carryover from the Hamed fight.

"I wanted to win this fight impressively so people would understand that," Sanchez said. "I knew I was stronger than he was, and

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Sanchez buries a right into Espinosa's body

I think he felt my power early. After that, he didn't want to get hit and it was a matter of time.

"I was patient and I looked for my spots. Not a lot of people gave me a shot against Hamed, but I went in there and knocked him down and I think showed I can fight and deserved to be in that fight. And against Espinosa, I wanted to build on that and prove I could compete with anybody."

The 23-year-old Sanchez, 27-2 (24), said he hoped to get a shot against one of the featherweight champions, though his agent, Cameron Dunkin, suggested he may move down in weight and try to win a title at 122.

Espinosa, 45-10 (24), won't be trying for any more titles. After a distinguished career in which he captured both the WBC bantamweight and WBC featherweight titles, the 33-year-old Filipino said after the fight that he had had enough and planned to retire.

Television: Showtime

Promoter: America Presents

(1-6-01)

Kevin Iole

Willie Jorrin W 12 Oscar Larios

Sacramento, California: Defending the WBC super bantamweight crown for the first time, Jorrin hoped to put on a more convincing performance than he did during his title-winning bid last September. Jorrin won the championship with a disputed majority decision over Michael Brodie in Brodie's hometown of Manchester, England. This time, he made mandatory challenger Oscar Larios, 39-3-1 (30), come to his backyard, and again, Jorrin, 28-0 (12), emerged with a debatable decision.

Jorrin, 122, began the fight by landing right-hand leads almost at will, bringing the partisan crowd of 4,994 at ARCO Arena to its feet. After the first three minutes, it looked like Jorrin would have an easy night. But Larios, 122, started to apply pressure on the Sacramento native in the second round. Closing the distance, Larios took away Jorrin's straight right hand and won the second on all three judges' scorecards.

In the third, Jorrin, moving side to side and darting in and out, worked the body effectively, banging the Mexican challenger's ribcage with a battery of hooks. However Larios, 24, who appeared to be in tremendous shape, didn't seem to be slowed down by the body attack and kept the heat on Jorrin over the next few rounds.

In round six, Larios landed a good right hand that stopped Jorrin in his tracks. The champion repaid the favor by connecting below Larios' belt. When referee Chuck Hassett (USA) didn't seem to notice, the champ went downstairs a second time. The low blows seemed to take some of the steam out of Larios' attack momentarily. Jorrin was issued no warning, and in the next round, Jorrin again landed a low blow while in a clinch, but the ref warned Larios for holding. Jorrin was finally warned for hitting below the belt in the eighth after two more shots found their way south of the border. Jorrin displayed excellent defensive skills in that round, slipping punches while trapped on the ropes.

After 10 rounds, two of the judges had the fight even. In the 11th, the 31-year-old Jorrin shot a right hand down the middle as he had done so effectively in the first.

Heading into the last frame, both fighters sensed that the outcome could be determined by the next three minutes. Larios came out firing a rotation of rights and lefts to the body, but Jorrin answered right back. With about a minute left in the explosive round, Jorrin landed a hard left hook before both fighters finally ran out of gas.

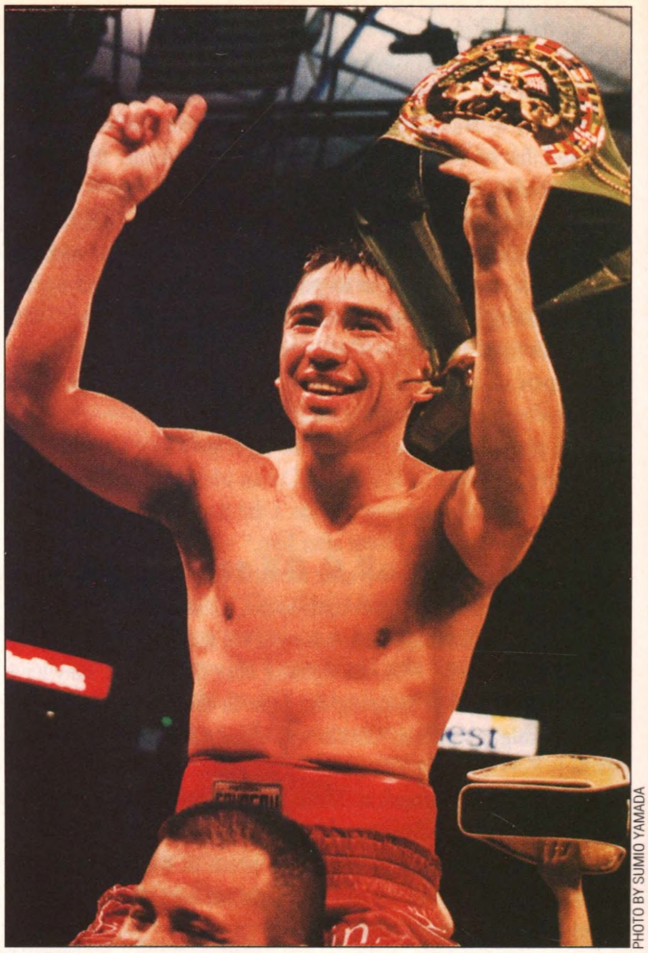


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Jorrin celebrates narrow win over Larios

All three judges, Larry Rozadilla (USA), Omar Mintum (Mexico), and Ken Morita (Japan), were in agreement, scoring the bout 115-113 for the defending champion. THE RING agreed with the outcome, scoring it 116-113. However, there were some at ringside, including many members of the media, who thought the title should have changed hands.

Jorrin had only complimentary things to say about his foe. "In the first round, I hit the guy with some hammer right hands, and he came right back. He's a hell of a fighter," Jorrin said. "Mexican fighters always come to win."

Not surprisingly, Larios thought he was the victim of a hometown decision, saying, "It was a good, close fight, but I thought I won. I made the fight. I threw more punches, and he tied me up."

Jorrin who received $110,000 for his efforts, hopes to land a big-money fight with the likes of Naseem Hamed or Marco Antonio Barrera. A more likely scenario, however, is a rematch with Brodie, currently ranked number two by the WBC.

Television: ESPN2

Promoter: Don Chargin Productions

(1-19-01)

Marc Lichtenfeld ■

New Face

(Continued from page 20)

started playing when I was about 10, but I was always getting sent off. One of the case workers suggested I should go to a boxing gym to channel my aggression into a sport that would instill discipline. I did, and, thankfully, I started to make something of my life."

Gomez is not the first man to have been rescued by boxing's salvational qualities. Nor will he be the last. His is almost the classic rags-to-riches tale associated with the hardest game. But it does not end there. The dawn of his professional boxing career was marred by the kind of incident that could have persuaded him never to throw a fist in anger again.

Late one night outside the Fifth Avenue Nightclub in Manchester, Gomez was singled out by a gang of seven men. They wanted trouble with the young, aspiring fighter. They got more than they bargained for, or Gomez bargained for.

Set upon, Gomez gathered himself sufficiently to target one of his group of assailants and hit him with a left hand that immediately floored him. The man hit his head on the sidewalk as he fell, and, at the sight of blood seeping from a deep wound, his accomplices ran off. Gomez was left to comfort his attacker until the ambulance crew arrived at the ugly scene. When it did, he ran off too.

"I tried to help him the best I could and made my exit when the medical people came," Gomez remembered. "It might have been the next day or the day after when I saw on the television news that the man I hit had died as a result of his injuries. I started crying. That's how hard I am.

"I turned myself in at the local police station, and I was charged with murder, later reduced to manslaughter. I was found not guilty. My plea was self-defense. But I was so sorry for that kid dying. When I won the British title, I dedicated it to him, Sam Powell from Manchester. His family was in touch with me, and they assured me they didn't hold me responsible for what happened. That meant a lot because it would have been difficult otherwise for me to continue my career.

"But I'm so determined now. I've been through hard times. I know how harsh life can be. What comforts me is the thought that my family will never have to go through what I've been through."

A points victory last December over former Commonwealth champion Ian McLeod confirmed Gomez as one of the young British fighters with genuine world title aspirations. Against an experienced foe, he dug in when he had to and inflicted a sustained beating on the brave Scot.

As we went to press, Gomez was preparing for his first appearance on Showtime, a tremendous opportunity for him to make an impact in the United States. But Gomez, more than most, knows how ephemeral the good times can be.

"I was hoping to challenge Paul Ingle for the IBF featherweight title until he suffered terrible brain injuries in his defense against Mbulelo Botile," said Gomez. "You can't take anything for granted. You have to make the most of what you've got. That's what I intend to do."

What Gomez has is plenty of guts to go with his rich reservoir of talent. One of the powerful weapons he has in his possession is the left uppercut, which was also one of Wilfredo Gomez' most feared punches. Michael's skill with the punch prompted trainer Brian Hughes to start calling him Gomez in the gym. He is never reluctant to mix it up, ensuring constant excitement, though bruising around the eyes following his impressive effort against McLeod persuaded him to "go back to school" and spend more time working on his defense. As Gomez is the mandatory challenger to Acelino Freitas, the Brazilian star who has knocked out all of his opponents, this is a very sensible idea.

"I would love to fight Freitas. He's knocked out everybody, but it depends on who you're hitting," Gomez declared. "I don't think much about some of the guys he has fought.

"Beating Gary Thornhill for the British title was my coming of age. I showed everybody what I can do and proved it to myself by knocking him out in the second round. Fighting Naseem Hamed is my ultimate goal, and I want to be in a position where I am fulfilled and can retire by the time I'm 26. The way I fight, I don't want to be staying in this game much longer than that." ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING'S European correspondent.

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WORLDWIDE RATINGS

The ratings of the three major governing bodies recognized by The Ring are supplied by the organizations themselves. They are updated on these pages as soon as they are made available to us. In this issue, the WBA ratings were compiled as of December 2000, the WBC as of December 2000, and the IBF as of January 2001.

HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Lennox Lewis (GB)	C	–	C
Evander Holyfield (USA)	–	C	–
Mike Tyson (USA)	1	5	9
Vitaly Klitschko (UKR)	2	6	–
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	3	–	8
Clifford Etienne (USA)	4	–	11
Larry Donald (USA)	5	4	7
John Ruiz (USA)	6	–	–
David Tua (NZ)	7	7	5
Vaughn Bean (USA)	8	12	–
Lance Whitaker (USA)	9	–	–
Henry Akinwande (GB)	10	8	–
Vacant	–	1	1
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	–	2	–
John Ruiz (USA)	–	3	12
David Izon (NIG)	13	9	–
Oleg Maskaev (UKR)	24	10	10
Vacant	–	–	2
Danell Nicholson (USA)	15	–	3
Hasim Rahman (USA)	14	–	4
Wladimir Klitschko (UKR)	–	–	6

CRUISERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Juan Carlos Gomez (CUBA)	C	–	–
Virgil Hill (USA)	–	C	–
Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)	–	–	C
Marcelo Dominguez (ARG)	1	5	6
Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)	2	–	10
Carl Thompson (GB)	3	8	3
Torsten May (GER)	4	10	2
Louis Azille (DR)	5	4	8
Jorge Castro (ARG)	6	–	11
Ezra Sellars (USA)	7	–	7
Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)	8	6	–
Arthur Williams (USA)	9	7	4
Dale Brown (CAN)	10	–	–
Vacant	–	1	–
James Toney (USA)	11	2	5
Alexander Gurov (UKR)	17	3	–
Valery Vikhor (LAT)	–	9	–
Alex Gonzales (USA)	–	–	1
Freemon Barr (BAH)	–	–	9

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Roy Jones (USA)	C	C	C
Michael Nunn (USA)	1	–	–
Clinton Woods (GB)	2	8	4
Yawe Davis (ITA)	3	–	–
Eric Harding (USA)	4	–	3
Thomas Ulrich (GER)	5	–	–
David Telesco (USA)	6	5	12
Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)	7	6	1
Jean-Marc Mormerck (FRA)	8	–	–
Chris Johnson (CAN)	9	–	–
Julio Gonzalez (USA)	10	9	–
Lou Del Valle (USA)	–	1	–
Jean-Mark Mormeck (FRA)	–	2	–
Frank Liles (USA)	–	3	–
Derrick Harmon (USA)	11	4	8
Richard Hall (USA)	17	7	–
Reggie Johnson (USA)	12	10	10
Vacant	–	–	2
Antonio Tarver (USA)	14	–	5
Lincoln Carter (USA)	13	12	6
Will Taylor (USA)	–	–	7
Billy Lewis (USA)	–	–	9

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Dingaan Thobela (SA)	C	–	–
Bruno Girard (FRA)	–	C	–
Sven Ottke (GER)	–	–	C
Eric Lucas (CAN)	1	–	–
Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)	2	1	5
Glenn Catley (GB)	3	–	–
Markus Beyer (GER)	4	–	12
Mario Velt (GER)	5	4	8
Dana Rosenblatt (USA)	6	3	6
Stephane Ouellet (CAN)	7	–	–
Byron Mitchell (USA)	8	5	–
David Starie (GB)	9	8	–
Omar Sheika (USA)	10	–	9
Manuel Siacca (PR)	–	2	–
Thomas Tate (USA)	11	6	3
Mads Larsen (DEN)	12	7	–
Charles Brewer (USA)	–	9	4
Richie Woodhall (GB)	–	10	–
James Butler (USA)	17	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Syd Vanderpool (CAN)	–	–	7
Guillermo Jones (PAN)	–	11	10

MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Keith Holmes (USA)	C	–	–
William Joppy (USA)	–	C	–
Bernard Hopkins (USA)	–	–	C
Erland Betare (FRA)	1	–	–
David Reid (USA)	2	2	3
Howard Eastman (GB)	3	1	5
Robert McCracken (GB)	4	–	–
Ali Ennebati (FRA)	5	–	11
Kevin Palmer (USA)	6	–	–
Carl Daniels (USA)	7	5	1
Brian Barbosa (USA)	8	–	7
Tito Mendoza (PAN)	9	–	8
Jerry Elliott (NIG)	10	–	–
Darren Obah (AUSTRL)	–	3	–
Julio Cesar Green (DR)	–	4	–
Rito Ruvalcaba (MEX)	–	6	–
Hassine Cherifi (FRA)	–	7	12
Lonnie Bradley (USA)	–	8	–
Antonio Perugino (ITA)	16	9	–
Ryan Rhodes (GB)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Stephane Ouellet (CAN)	–	11	4
Antwun Echols (USA)	–	–	6
Santos Cardona (PR)	–	–	9
Armand Krajnc (SLV)	–	–	10

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Francisco Castillejo (SPA)	C	–	–
Felix Trinidad (PR)	–	C	C
Roman Karmazin (RUS)	1	5	–
Fernando Vargas (USA)	2	2	3
Winky Wright (USA)	3	3	1
Alfred Ankamah (GHA)	4	–	–
Quirino Garcia (MEX)	5	–	–
J.C. Candelo (COL)	6	–	9
Fitz Vanderpool (CAN)	7	–	–
Nicolas Cervera (COL)	8	–	–
Tony Marshall (USA)	9	–	–
Akira Ohigashi (JAP)	10	10	–
Jose Flores (MEX)	12	1	5
Ike Quartey (GHA)	–	4	12
Julio Cesar Vazquez (ARG)	–	6	–
Mamadou Thiam (FRA)	–	7	–
Frank Olsen (DEN)	25	8	–
Kevin Kelly (USA)	15	9	–
Robert Frazier (USA)	–	–	2
Bronco McKart (USA)	17	–	4
Ross Thompson (USA)	–	–	6
Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)	30	–	7
Alex Bunema (USA)	–	–	8
Emmett Linton (USA)	–	12	10

WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Shane Mosley (USA)	C	–	–
Vacant	–	C	C
Oscar De La Hoya (USA)	1	–	–
Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)	2	10	4
Jose Luis Cruz (MEX)	3	–	–
Kofi Jantuah (GHA)	4	11	10
Miguel Angel Gonzalez (MEX)	5	6	–
Carlos Baldomir (ARG)	6	12	–
Danny Perez (USA)	7	–	–
Oba Carr (USA)	8	9	3
Ike Quartey (GHA)	9	–	–
Thomas Damgaard (DEN)	10	5	–
Andrew Lewis (GUY)	22	1	7
James Page (USA)	–	2	–
Ricardo Mayorga (CR)	–	3	–
Arturo Gatti (USA)	–	4	11
Michael Trabant (GERE)	18	7	–
Chantel Stanciel (USA)	28	8	–
Raul Frank (USA)	–	–	1
Vernon Forrest (USA)	–	–	2
Frank Olsen (DEN)	–	–	5
Michele Piccirillo (ITA)	14	–	6
Larry Marks (USA)	–	–	8
Cory Spinks (USA)	12	–	9

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)	C	–	–
Sharmba Mitchell (USA)	–	C	–
Zab Judah (USA)	–	–	C
Oktay Urkal (TUR)	1	4	10
Hector Camacho Jr (PR)	2	1	7

Diobelis Hurtado (CUB)	3	2	–
Arturo Gatti (CAN)	4	–	–
Gianluca Branco (ITA)	5	–	–
Ricky Quiles (USA)	6	–	–
Mikhail Krivolapov (RUS)	7	–	–
Ray Oliveira (USA)	8	–	6
Vince Phillips (USA)	9	–	–
John-John Molina (PR)	10	6	–
Randall Bailey (USA)	19	3	8
Khalid Rahilou (FRA)	–	5	–
Ricky Hatton (GB)	14	7	12
Alex Trujillo (PR)	–	8	–
Hiroyuki Maeda (JAP)	–	9	–
Gabriel Mapuoka (FRA)	11	10	9
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Allan Vester (DEN)	17	–	3
George Scott (SWE)	28	–	4
Terronn Millett (USA)	–	–	5

LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Takanori Hatakeyama (JAP)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Paul Spadafora (USA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Cesar Bazan (MEX)	1	–	–
Steve Johnston (USA)	2	–	3
Julien Lorcy (FRA)	3	1	6
Lawrence Ngobeni (SA)	4	–	–
Lovemore Ndou (SA)	5	–	–
Thembinkosi Ntyenene (SA)	6	–	–
Diego Corrales (USA)	7	–	4
Alberto Sicurella (ARG)	8	2	–
Sungho Yuh (KOR)	9	–	–
Juan Lazcano (USA)	10	–	5
Rick Yoshimura (JAP)	–	3	–
Gilbert Serrano (VEN)	–	4	–
Stefano Zoff (ITA)	12	5	–
Jean-Baptiste Mendy (FRA)	16	6	–
Raul Balbi (ARG)	–	7	–
Edson Xuxa Nascimento (BRA)	23	8	–
Djamel Lifa (FRA)	19	9	–
Dennis Holbaek (DEN)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Billy Irwin (CAN)	–	–	7
Victoriano Damian Sosa (DR)	13	–	8
Joel Perez (USA)	–	–	9
Angel Manfredy (USA)	–	–	10

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Floyd Mayweather (USA)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Joel Casamayor (CUB)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Steve Forbes (USA)	**–**	**7**	**C**
Jesus Chavez (USA)	1	10	5
Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)	2	–	–
Kengo Nagashima (JAP)	3	–	–
Tiger Ari (PHIL)	4	–	–
Philip Ndou (SA)	5	–	–
Goyo Vargas (MEX)	6	–	–
Carlos Hernandez (EL SALV)	7	–	–
Michael Gomez (GB)	8	–	–
Koji Arisawa (JAP)	9	–	–
Boris Sinitsin (RUS)	10	–	–
Vacant	–	1	1
Lakva Sim (MON)	–	2	–
Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)	11	3	8
Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)	–	4	–
Jongkwon Baek (KOR)	–	5	–
Luis Navarro (USA)	14	6	6
Robert Garcia (USA)	–	8	10
Jorge Barrios (ARG)	–	9	–
John Brown (USA)	–	–	2
Raul Balbi (ARG)	–	–	3
Carlos Hernandez (USA)	–	–	4
David Santos (USA)	–	–	7
Juan Arias (USA)	–	–	9

FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Guty Espadas (MEX)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Derrick Gainer (USA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Mbulelo Botile (SA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Injin Chi (KOR)	1	–	–
Tony Wehbee (AUS)	2	–	–
Luisito Espinosa (PHIL)	3	–	–
Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)	4	3	–
Scott Harrison (GB)	5	–	–
Manuel Calvo (SPA)	6	–	–
Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)	7	–	–
Edgar Barcenas (MEX)	8	–	–
Juan Carlos Ramirez (MEX)	9	–	–
Hector Velazquez (MEX)	10	–	–
Victor Polo (COL)	–	1	2
Naseem Hamed (GB)	–	2	3
Philip Ndou (SA)	–	4	–
Istvan Kovacs (HUN)	–	5	12
Angel Vasquez (PR)	–	6	4
Lewis Woods (US)	–	7	–
Fred Norwood (USA)	–	8	–
Pablo Chacon (ARG)	–	9	–
Kengo Nagashima (JAP)	–	10	–
Manuel Medina (MEX)	14	–	1
Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)	–	–	5
David Toledo (USA)	–	–	6
Oscar Larios (MEX)	–	–	7
Panther Yanagida (JAP)	–	–	8
Augie Sanchez (USA)	23	–	9
Frankie Toledo (USA)	–	–	10

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Willie Jorrin (USA)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Clarence Adams (USA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Oscar Larios (MEX)	1	–	–
Michael Brodie (GB)	2	12	10
Manny Pacquaio (PHIL)	3	–	3
Enrique Sanchez (MEX)	4	5	4
Cesar Soto (MEX)	5	–	–
Yongjin Cho (KOR)	6	–	–
Israel Vazquez (MEX)	7	–	6
Agapito Sanchez (DR)	8	–	–
Hector Julia Avila (DR)	9	–	9
Marcos Licona (USA)	10	–	–
Yobert Ortega (VEN)	–	1	–
Antonio Cermeno (VEN)	–	2	–
Jose Rojas (VEN)	25	3	–
Bugiarso (INDO)	–	4	–
Nestor Garza (MEX)	–	6	12
Vladislav Antonov (RUS)	12	7	2
Kozo Ishii (JAP)	–	8	–
Osamu Sato (JAP)	11	9	–
Johnny Armour (GB)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
F. Rakkiatgym (INDO)	–	–	5
Sergei Devakov (UKR)	16	–	7
Arnel Barotillo (AUSTRL)	27	–	8

BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Paul Ayala (USA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Tim Austin (USA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Ricardo Barajas (MEX)	1	12	–
Genaro Garcia (USA)	2	9	–
Adan Vargas (MEX)	3	5	5
Cuauhtemoc Gomez (MEX)	4	–	11
Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)	5	–	–
Hugo Dianzo (MEX)	6	11	–
Jess Maca (PHIL)	7	–	–
Alejandro Estrada (MEX)	8	–	–
Johnny Bredahl (DEN)	9	7	–
Luigi Castiglione (ITA)	10	–	9
Eidy Moya (VEN)	–	1	–
Sahoiu Sithchai Condo (THAI)	–	2	–
Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)	–	3	–
Danny Romero (USA)	–	4	4
Rafael Marquez (MEX)	13	6	10
Johnny Tapia (USA)	–	8	–
Jorge Eliecer Julio (COL)	–	10	12
Jesus Perez (COL)	21	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Pete Frissina (USA)	–	–	3
Arthur Johnson (USA)	–	–	6
Steve Dotse (GHA)	–	–	7
Dario Azuaga (PAR)	–	–	8

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Masanori Tokuyama (JAP)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Leo Gamez (VEN)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Felix Machado (VEN)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)	1	–	–
In Joo Cho (KOR)	2	–	–
Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)	3	–	–
Kazuhiro Ryuko (JAP)	4	–	–
Reynaldo Hurtado (COL)	5	–	–
Vernie Torres (USA)	6	–	7
Luis Bolanos (COL)	7	10	6
Mauricio Pastrana (COL)	8	–	5
Seungrok Choi (KOR)	9	–	–
Raul Juarez (MEX)	10	–	–
Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)	–	1	8
Jesus Rojas (VEN)	–	2	3
Mbwana Matumla (TNZ)	–	3	–
Alexander Munoz (VEN)	–	4	–
Sornpichai Pisnurachank (THAI)	–	5	–
Luigi Castiglione (ITA)	–	6	–
Hideki Todaka (JAP)	15	7	–
Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)	–	8	–
Setsuo Kobayashi (JAP)	–	9	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Adonis Rivas (NIC)	–	–	4
Julio Gamboa (NIC)	–	–	9
Diego Morales (MEX)	–	12	10

FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Malcolm Tunacao (PHIL)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Eric Morel (USA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Irene Pacheco (COL)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Chatchai Sasakul (THAI)	1	–	–
Alex Ali Baba (GHA)	2	–	–
Celes Kobayashi (JAP)	3	–	–
Mike Trejo (USA)	4	5	5
Medgoen Singsurat (THAI)	5	–	–
Gerson Guerrero (MEX)	6	–	–
Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)	7	8	1
Hayato Asai (JAP)	8	–	–
Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)	9	–	–
Alejandro Montiel (MEX)	10	7	4
Jose Lopez (VEN)	–	1	–
Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)	–	2	–
Panieng Okuda (THAI)	–	3	–
Isidro Garcia (MEX)	–	4	–
Mzukisi Sikali (SA)	29	6	–
Ruben Sanchez-Leon (MEX)	–	9	–
Gilberto Gonzalez (VEN)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Hawk Makepula (SA)	–	–	3
Martin Castillo (MEX)	–	12	6
Ferid Ben Jeddou (TUN)	–	–	7
David Guerault (FRA)	13	–	8
Shiro Yahiro (JAP)	–	–	9
Zoltan Lunka (TUR)	20	–	10

JR. FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Yosam Choi (KOR)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Bebis Mendoza (COL)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Ricardo Lopez (MEX)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Jorge Arce (MEX)	1	7	4
Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)	2	10	–
Hidenobu Honda (JAP)	3	2	–
Panieng Sasiprabha (THAI)	4	–	–
Takayuki Korogi (JAP)	5	–	–
Eric Ortiz (MEX)	6	–	–
Juanito Rubillar (PHIL)	7	–	–
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (THAI)	8	–	–
Kohki Tanaka (JAP)	9	11	–
Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)	10	9	–
Pichitnoi C. Siriwat (THAI)	–	1	–
Yura Dimas (MON)	17	3	–
Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)	–	4	10
Noel Arambulet (VEN)	–	5	–
Pongsaklek Nakornton (THAI)	–	6	–
Nelson Dieppa (DR)	–	8	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Zolani Petelo (SA)	–	–	2
Pongsaklek Sithkanongsak (THAI)	–	–	3
Alejandro Montiel (MEX)	–	–	5
Ratanapol Sor Vorapin (THAI)	–	–	6
Alex Sanchez (PR)	–	–	7
Oscar Andrade (MEX)	–	–	8
Everardo Morales (MEX)	–	–	9

STRAWWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Keitaro Hoshino (JAP)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Vacant	**–**	**–**	**C**
Wandee Chor Chareon (THAI)	1	–	5
Yasuo Tokimitsu (JAP)	2	–	6
Juan Keb Baas (MEX)	3	–	–
Erdene Chuluun (MON)	4	–	–
Makoto Suzuki (JAP)	5	10	–
Jaewon Kim (KOR)	6	–	–
Andy Tabanas (PHIL)	7	11	9
Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)	8	–	–
Joma Gamboa (PHIL)	9	4	–
Zarlit Rodrigo (PHIL)	10	–	–
Chana Porpaoin (THAI)	17	1	–
Daniel Reyes (COL)	–	2	1
Jose Garcia (COL)	–	3	–
Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)	14	5	–
Songkram Porpaoin (THAI)	–	6	–
Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)	–	7	7
Udomdet Porpaoin (THAI)	–	8	–
Fasan Pongsawan (THAI)	–	9	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Kermin Guardia (COL)	–	–	3
Rocky Palma (JAP)	–	–	4
Surachai Saengmorokot (THAI)	–	–	8
Myungsup Park (KOR)	–	–	10

CLASSIC

From THE RING, October 1990

DARK SHADOWS

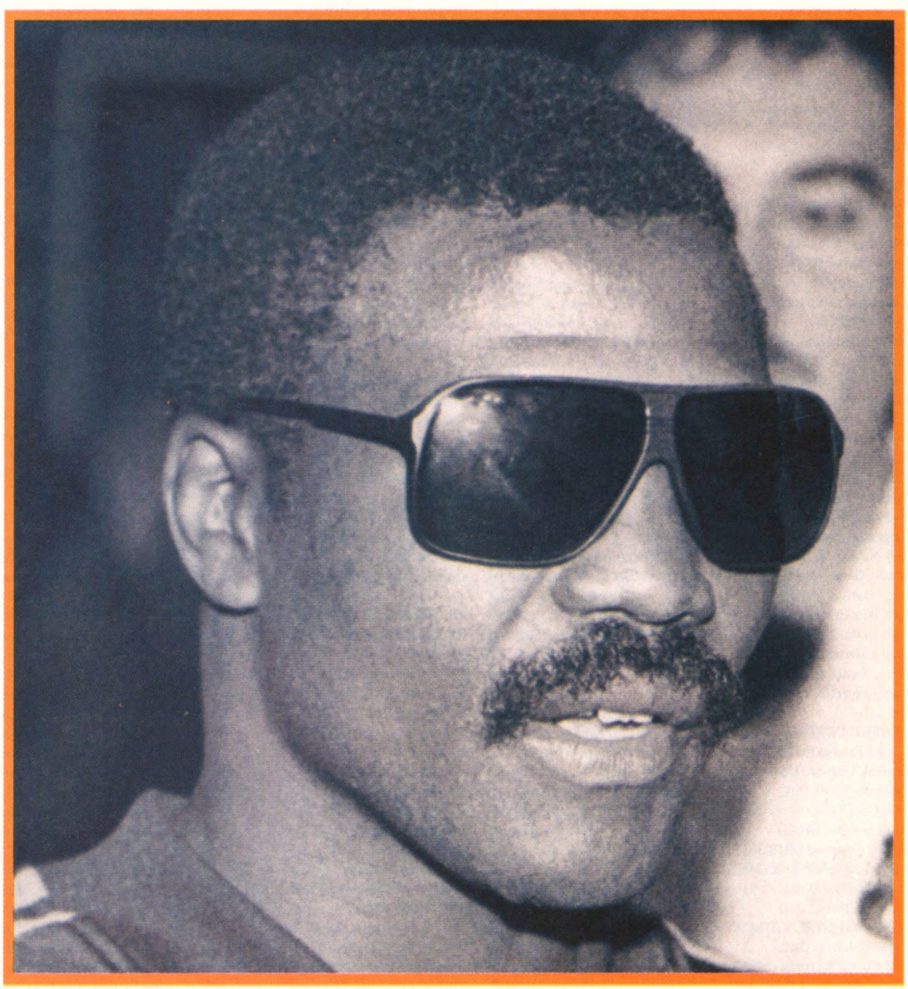
The Comeback of Aaron Pryor

By Pete Ehrmann

"Forward!"—the official motto of the state of Wisconsin

Harlan Zea was a Wisconsin promoter in the wild old days, and when he matched Stanley Ketchel and Billy Papke in Milwaukee in 1906, he put a character called Blink McCloskey in the semi-windup. Several days before the fight, McCloskey came to Zea with a hand over his left eye, and when the fighter removed the hand, Zea saw that the eye socket was empty. Blink had a glass left eye; it had fallen out and he had stepped on it. Zea was aghast, having been unaware that McCloskey was a one-eyed fighter. He gave Blink $5 for a new glass eye and found himself a new semi-windup.

Diana Lewis is a Wisconsin boxing promoter in the wild new days, and when she



After being banned by Nevada, New York, New Jersey, and California, former junior welter champ Aaron Pryor found Wisconsin was willing to permit him a license to fight, though he was legally blind in his left eye.

Diana Lewis, whose promotion of Pryor brought the state of Wisconsin into the boxing spotlight, said of Pryor, "If he's blind in one eye, he's still got another eye."

signed Aaron Pryor to fight in Madison on May 16, after Nevada, New York, New Jersey, and California had banned him because the former junior welterweight champion is legally blind in his left eye, her explanation was, "If he's blind in one eye, he's still got another eye."

So much for moving forward, and for the reputation of a state that once was looked to for scrupulous supervision and standards. All that went out the window in the loony soap opera that gripped the boxing world in mid-May. The main cast of characters included the pathetic Pryor, 34, who lost his title, money, and health six years ago to cocaine; Lewis, 45, a self-styled sports agent who had never promoted a fight before and happily—and superfluously—advertised the fact that "ignorance guides me;" and the Wisconsin Department of Licensing and Regulation (DLR).

In the 1980s, Pryor was a brilliant fighter whose epic first battle with Alexis Arguello, won by Pryor, was named Fight of the Decade by THE RING. But then cocaine brought the champion down hard and he didn't box from mid-1984 until August 1987. His first comeback effort resulted in his first career loss (after 37 victories), as Bobby Joe Young stopped Pryor in seven rounds. More than a year later, Pryor beat Herminio Morales. After that, however, his boxing career was believed to be finished following the disclosure that he was suffering from both a detached retina and a cataract.

After the New York State Athletic Commission suspended him on January 26, 1989, following an adverse medical report, Pryor had surgery on the eye. But according to a commission spokesman, he has since been instructed four times to have his vision examined by commission doctors as a prerequisite for getting back his license to box, and has refused to do so.

Earlier this year, Pryor went to New Jersey and Nevada in hopes of fighting Hector Camacho, but was turned down in both states because of the condition of his left eye.

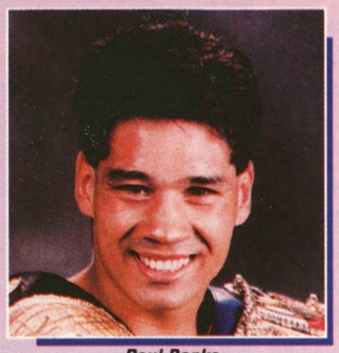
Enter Lewis, one of whose major successes as a sports agent was getting a one-time cowchip-throwing champ a tryout with the New York Jets. In April, she met Pryor in Detroit and decided that he was just the instrument with which to set in to motion her latest brainstorm—to make Madison "the boxing town it used to be." So she brought Pryor to Madison, started him training in the basement of her home, and announced that he would fight a scheduled eight-round bout on May 16, at the Masonic Temple, just down the block from the Wisconsin State Capitol.

Ignorance wasn't her only guide. She also had Stan Johnson, her live-in boyfriend and a convicted armed robber, who, as a heavyweight boxer from 1980 to 1988, compiled a scintillating record of 2-23, with 18 of his losses coming by first-round kayo. After retiring from "combat," he went into the entrepreneurial end of the fight game, managing and booking boxers under a dazzling array of aliases. According to Lewis, Johnson was Pryor's new trainer.

When word got out that Pryor was going to fight in Madison, questions about

Pryor's epic first fight with Alexis Arguello on November 12, 1982, was named Fight of the Decade by THE RING. Two years later, Pryor was struggling with a cocaine addiction, forcing "The Hawk" into inactivity from mid-'85 until August 1987.

THE RING RATINGS, October 1990



Paul Banke

HEAVYWEIGHTS
1. **Buster Douglas**, Columbus, OH
2. **Mike Tyson**, Catskill, NY
3. **Evander Holyfield**, Atlanta, GA
4. **Razor Ruddock**, Canada
5. **Tim Witherspoon**, Philadelphia, PA
6. **Francesco Damiani**, Italy
7. **Carl Williams**, White Plains, NY
8. **Tony Tucker**, Big Oaks, CA
9. **Alex Stewart**, Brooklyn, NY
10. **Renaldo Snipes**, Yonkers, NY

CRUISERWEIGHTS
1. **Carlos DeLeon**, Puerto Rico
2. **Taoufik Belbouli**, France
3. **Jeff Lampkin**, Youngstown, OH
4. **Robert Daniels**, Miami, FL
5. **Nate Miller**, Philadelphia, PA
6. **Anaclet Wamba**, France
7. **Glenn McCrory**, England
8. **Mike Hunter**, Las Vegas, NV
9. **Johnny Nelson**, England
10. **Magne Havnaa**, Norway

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
1. **Virgil Hill**, Las Vegas, NV
2. **Prince Charles Williams**, Mansfield, OH
3. **Michael Moorer**, Detroit, MI
4. **Jeff Harding**, Australia
5. **Dennis Andries**, Detroit, MI
6. **Andrew Maynard**, Laurel, MD
7. **David Vedder**, San Jose, CA
8. **Leslie Stewart**, Trinidad & Tobago
9. **Eric Nicoletta**, France
10. **Booker T. Word**, Ypsilanti, MI

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
1. **Ray Leonard**, Potomac, MD
2. **Thomas Hearns**, Las Vegas, NV
3. **Christophe Tiozzo**, France
4. **Lindell Holmes**, Detroit, MI
5. **Tony Byrd**, Los Angeles, CA
6. **Frank Tate**, Houston, TX
7. **Dario Matteoni**, Argentina
8. **James Kinchen**, San Diego, CA
9. **Victor Cordova**, Panama
10. **Juan Carlos Gimenez**, Paraguay

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
1. **Michael Nunn**, Los Angeles, CA
2. **Sumbu Kalambay**, Italy
3. **Mike McCallum**, Brooklyn, NY
4. **Roberto Duran**, Miami, FL
5. **Iran Barkley**, Bronx, NY
6. **Herol Graham**, England
7. **Michael Watson**, England
8. **Nigel Benn**, England
9. **Donald Curry**, Fort Worth, TX
10. **Steve Collins**, Brockton, MA

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
1. **Julian Jackson**, Virgin Islands
2. **Gianfranco Rosi**, Italy
3. **Terry Norris**, Mission Valley, CA
4. **John Mugabi**, Tampa, FL
5. **John David Jackson**, Tucson, AZ
6. **Rene Jacquot**, France
7. **Darrin Van Horn**, Lexington, KY
8. **Chris Pyatt**, England
9. **Julio Cesar Vasquez**, Argentina
10. **Jorge Castro**, Argentina

WELTERWEIGHTS
1. **Marlon Starling**, South Windsor, CT
2. **Simon Brown**, Germantown, MD
3. **Mark Breland**, Brooklyn, NY
4. **Buddy McGirt**, Brentwood, NY
5. **Maurice Blocker**, Washington, D.C.
6. **Glenwood Brown**, Plainfield, NJ
7. **Aaron Davis**, Bronx, NY
8. **Tyrone Trice**, Detroit, MI
9. **Genaro Leon**, Los Angeles, CA
10. **Kirkland Laing**, England

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
1. **Julio Cesar Chavez**, Mexico
2. **Meldrick Taylor**, Philadelphia, PA
3. **Juan Coggi**, Argentina
4. **Roger Mayweather**, Las Vegas, NV
5. **Hector Camacho**, Big Cypress, FL
6. **Loreto Garza**, Sacramento, CA
7. **Louie Lomeli**, Melrose Park, IL
8. **Frankie Randall**, Morristown, TN
9. **John Meekins**, New York, NY
10. **Sammy Fuentes**, Puerto Rico

LIGHTWEIGHTS
1. **Pernell Whitaker**, Norfolk, VA
2. **Juan Nazario**, Puerto Rico
3. **Tracy Spann**, Plainfield, NJ
4. **Freddie Pendleton**, Miami, FL
5. **Greg Haugen**, Henderson, NV
6. **Edwin Rosario**, Puerto Rico
7. **John Duplessis**, New Orleans, LA
8. **Poli Diaz**, Spain
9. **David Gonzales**, San Jose, CA
10. **Pedro Sanchez**, New York, NY

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
1. **Azumah Nelson**, Ghana
2. **Tony Lopez**, Sacramento, CA
3. **Brian Mitchell**, South Africa
4. **Jeff Fenech**, Australia
5. **John-John Molina**, Puerto Rico
6. **Genaro Hernandez**, Los Angeles, CA
7. **Bernard Taylor**, Knoxville, TN
8. **Juan LaPorte**, New York, NY
9. **Joey Gamache**, Los Angeles, CA
10. **Frankie Mitchell**, Philadelphia, PA

FEATHERWEIGHTS
1. **Antonio Esparragoza**, Venezuela
2. **Jorge Paez**, Mexico
3. **Troy Dorsey**, Dallas, TX
4. **Louie Espinosa**, Phoenix, AZ
5. **Marcos Villasana**, Mexico
6. **Maurizio Stecca**, Italy
7. **Ricardo Cepeda**, Bronx, NY
8. **Eloy Rojas**, Venezuela
9. **Rafael Zuniga**, Colombia
10. **Paul Hodkinson**, England

his physical condition started to flood the DLR, which oversees about 40 occupations and activities in Wisconsin, including barbers, chiropractors, funeral directors, hearing aid dealers, and private eyes. Since 1980, when the Wisconsin Athletic Commission was eliminated by state budget cutters, the DLR has also been in charge of overseeing boxing promotions in the Badger State. After its decision to allow Pryor to fight, candidates for hearing aids or funeral homes might have thought about shopping in Minnesota.

On May 7, DLR Secretary Marlene Cummings announced that in spite of the former champion's vision problem in his left eye—confirmed by a Madison ophthalmologist who said Pryor had "about 25 percent to 35 percent vision" in it—he would be allowed to fight in Madison, because to bar him would constitute discrimination against the handicapped.

"Handicapped people," said Cummings, "should not be penalized for their

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT
1. **Paul Banke**, Quail Valley, CA
2. **Jesse Benavides**, Corpus Christi, TX
3. **Daniel Zaragoza**, Mexico
4. **Welcome Ncita**, South Africa
5. **Jesus Salad**, San Diego, CA
6. **Seung Hoon Lee**, South Korea
7. **Tracy Patterson**, New Paltz, NY
8. **Pedro Decima**, Argentina
9. **Jemal Hinton**, District Heights, MD
10. **Yong Hoon Lee**, South Korea

BANTAMWEIGHTS
1. **Raul Perez**, Mexico
2. **Orlando Canizales**, Laredo, TX
3. **Luisito Espinosa**, Philippines
4. **Israel Contreras**, Venezuela
5. **Wilfredo Vazquez**, Puerto Rico
6. **Pepillo Valdez**, Mexico
7. **Geraldo Martinez**, San Jose, CA
8. **Kiyoshi Hatanaka**, Japan
9. **Billy Hardy**, England
10. **Greg Richardson**, Youngstown, OH

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT
1. **Khaosai Galaxy**, Thailand
2. **Moon Sung Kil**, South Korea
3. **Nana Konadu**, Ghana
4. **Robert Quiroga**, San Antonio, TX
5. **Thanomsak Sithaobey**, Thailand
6. **Kid Akeem**, Las Vegas, NV
7. **Jose Ruiz**, Puerto Rico
8. **Shunichi Nakajima**, Japan
9. **Gilberto Roman**, Panama
10. **Johnny Tapia**, Albuquerque, NM

FLYWEIGHTS
1. **Sot Chitalada**, Thailand
2. **Yul Woo Lee**, South Korea
3. **Dave McAuley**, Ireland
4. **Jung Koo Chang**, South Korea
5. **Jesus Rojas**, Venezuela
6. **Richard Clarke**, Jamaica
7. **Javier Lucas**, Mexico
8. **Leopard Tamakuma**, Japan
9. **Romy Navarette**, Philippines
10. **Yong Kang Kim**, South Korea

handicaps. They should be allowed to do the same thing non-handicapped people can do."

Reaction was swift and incredulous, and suddenly Wisconsin was in the national boxing spotlight it hadn't occupied for 70 years.

"A Fight That Shouldn't Be," editorialized *Sports Illustrated*.

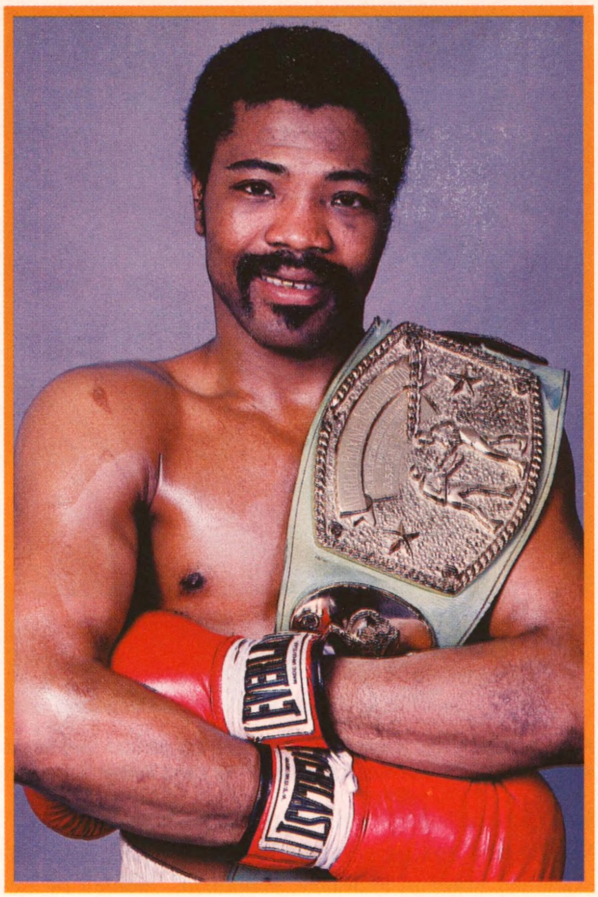
"If you go into the ring with one eye, you'd better be prepared to get a guide dog," said Don Muse of the California State Athletic Commission.

"It's ludicrous," said Nevada boxing commissioner Chuck Minker. "If he has one arm, he's handicapped; but would you allow him to fight? We're talking about boxing. Doesn't health and safety supersede discrimination in this case? This defies logic."

New York boxing commission chairman Randy Gordon appealed to Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson "for a stay of execution for Aaron Pryor."

Several members of the Wisconsin Legislature, concerned that the situation "must surely be making Wisconsin the laughingstock of the nation," also appealed to Thompson to stop the fight.

He didn't, but the governor did order another eye exam, and on May 12 the boxer was cleared by a Madison doctor who noted an "increased chance" of further damage to Pryor's left eye and advised him to have his retinas checked after boxing. Meanwhile, Dr. David



Despite his championship history, Pryor's approval by the Wisconsin Department of Licensing and Regulation (DLR) came under heavy scrutiny. The DLR maintained barring Pryor would constitute discrimination against the handicapped.

Pryor, behind sunglasses to shade his damaged left eye, had been examined by ophthalmologist Dr. David Smith, who said Pryor "can't even see the Big E [on an eye chart] without corrective lenses."

Pryor taunted Daryl Jones, a former sparring partner who had a 13-11 record. Further checks showed Jones had not fought in at least two years before facing Pryor.

Smith, consulting ophthalmologist to the New Jersey boxing commission, who examined Pryor in February, explained why "The Hawk" wouldn't be fighting in the Garden State.

"His eye has major damage," Smith told the Associated Press. "All the gel has been removed from the eye. This is more than a detachment. This is an eye without a focusing lens. He can't even see the big E [on an eye chart] without corrective lenses."

For his part, Pryor signed a waiver stipulating that he was fully aware "that because of poor vision, I could receive strong blows to my head and suffer head and brain damage. I could even be killed. In spite of the great risk to my health and safety, I want to box." If anything happened to him, the State of Wisconsin would not be legally liable.

But Lewis saw only glorious possibilities. "I tell people to throw caution to the wind and go for it," she said. "I had a sister who was a paraplegic in a wheelchair. Now she walks with a cane."

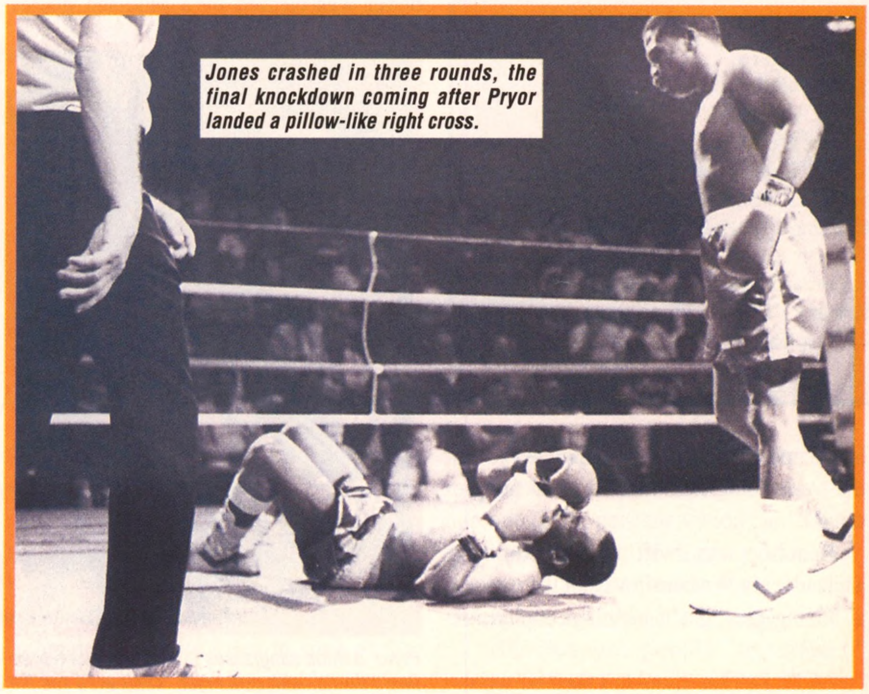
The day before the fight, the *New York Daily News* reported that Pryor's announced opponent, Daryl Jones, whose record had been given by Lewis as 26-4, was actually Jerry Strickland, a Midwesterner who "under his own name and other aliases ... has an 11-74 record with 38 knockout losses." This was vehemently denied by Lewis, but when the alleged Daryl Jones appeared at a press conference, he was not the man pictured on boxing posters all over Madison.

Lewis had an explanation for that: It was late when she put the poster together, and she cut out a photo of a fighter from THE RING who looked like Jones. Asked to produce some identification at the press conference, Jones said he didn't have any and had never had such a demand made of him. Whoever and wherever Daryl Jones was, a check of the record book showed that he hadn't fought in at least two years and had an actual record of 13-11. And once he had been employed as a sparring partner for Aaron Pryor.

But all that was nothing next to the goings-on the day of the fight. On the morning of May 16, about eight hours before the card was to begin, the DLR announced that it would not grant a permit for the show because Lewis had not met the requirement that boxing promoters be incorporated 30 days before a card. She had only gotten around to that detail the afternoon before, contrary to a sworn statement she had made half-a-year earlier. "Legal misrepresentation," said the DLR.

"Abuse of discretion," overruled Judge John Alghrimm, reinstating the fight at about 6 p.m., after Lewis filed an injunction against the state and testified that "it would probably totally ruin me" financially if the fight were called off. Earlier at her home, she had told reporters, "I don't think about money at all. Sure, I would lose money [if the fight were canceled], but I don't know. I just always can get money. Can't everyone?"

And so at about 11:30 that night, after Jerry Strickland had appeared in a prelimi-



Jones crashed in three rounds, the final knockdown coming after Pryor landed a pillow-like right cross.

The crowd chanted "Boring! Boring!" between knockdowns in the second round. Still, a smiling Pryor felt afterward as if he was on another title path. "[Jones] did hit me a couple of times in the eye and I didn't like it," Pryor said. "I'm going to have to cover up more next time."

nary and vouched for his identity by getting counted out after 48 seconds of the first round, Pryor finally entered the ring before about 300 spectators and a large press row, and made mean faces at the alleged Daryl Jones before the bell summoned him to his first ring action in two years. He weighed 154 pounds and looked very sluggish in the first round. Jones, 148, was more energetic and landed the first punch, a left hook to Pryor's head. Pryor mugged and swung wildly several times in losing the round.

But between rounds, the air seemed to go out of the former sparring partner with a noticeable whoosh, and in the second he was the sluggish one. He went down twice, and the action was so stirring that the crowd chanted "Boring! Boring!" between knockdowns. In the third, Pryor knocked Jones down again, and the fight ended at 1:15 of the round, with most in press row still uncertain about what had caused Jones' downfall.

In his dressing room, Pryor announced that he was back on the championship path and said, "He hit me a couple of times in the eye and I didn't like it. I'm going to have to cover myself up more next time."

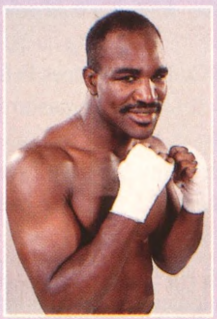
Two days later, the *Madison Capitol Times*, the city's oldest newspaper, made its first editorial comment on the whole production: "Rather than become embroiled in more of these stupid and time-wasting controversies, why don't we just do away with boxing in the state altogether?"

The Milwaukee Journal, the largest paper in Wisconsin, suggested that at the very least, boxers should not be permitted to hit each other above the collarbone.

But perhaps the most alarming prospect of all was raised by Lewis, who told reporters: "I plan on being Wisconsin boxing." Then she said she was trying to reach Mark Gastineau, the former New York Jet who wants to be a boxer, but would probably make a better cowchip thrower. ■

THE RING, October 1990

The Cover: THE RING recalled the great Rocky Graziano, who died of heart failure on May 22, 1990. The former middleweight champion was remembered most for his three classic duels against Tony Zale. Graziano was never in a dull fight during his 10-year career, compiling a 67-10-6 record, with 52 knockouts.

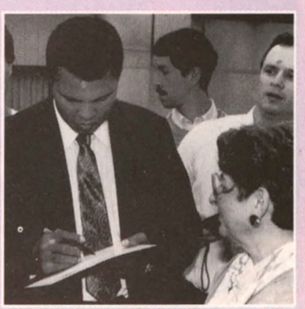


Evander Who?: Evander Holyfield was hard to recognize in the early-1990s. Holyfield had been the mandatory contender for the heavyweight title longer than any fighter the previous 10 years. Things were so bad, Holyfield was once invited to his own fight against Seamus McDonagh *by McDonagh*, who did not realize who "The Real Deal" was while they were in an elevator together.

Junior's Junior Days: THE RING took a sneak peak at a promising 19-year-old bantamweight from Bushwick, Brooklyn, who would eventually become a world champion. With his combination of speed and power, Junior Jones started his pro career 9-0 with six knockouts and had boxing people talking about his future.

Tyson Returns: Mike Tyson took apart Henry Tillman in one round in his comeback fight after the upset loss to Buster Douglas in Tokyo, Japan, that cost "Iron Mike" the undisputed heavyweight championship. Tyson claimed to have slowed his lifestyle down, since the birth of his son, Damato Kilrain Tyson.

Hall Of A Weekend: An assemblage of all-time greats gathered in Canastota, New York, for the unveiling of the new International Boxing Hall of Fame. Among the distinguished guests on hand was "The Greatest" himself, Muhammad Ali, who garnered the most attention.



COME OUT WRITING

We welcome your letters, which may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Ft. Washington, PA 19034

THE POWER OF TITO

I have one lingering question for any rational boxing fan out there around the world to entertain: What in God's name does Felix "Tito" Trinidad have in those gloves? That guy is an animal! I must admit it, before the Fernando Vargas fight, I still had my doubts about Tito's pugilistic prowess. Not anymore.

Never in my life have I seen a guy who can hit you with any given punch and change the whole complexion of a fight. He methodically picks mugs apart, the whole time causing his opponents to alter their game plans.

Some argue that Tommy Hearns was one of the biggest punchers of all-time at welterweight, junior middleweight, and middleweight. The difference is this: A week or two after getting knocked out by Hearns, guys are back in the gym preparing for their next fight. However, when Tito hits a man, he debilitates them. They are left wondering whether or not they should ever lace up the gloves again. He causes his opponents to lose their equilibrium in the most uncompromising manner, which in turn affects them for the rest of their careers, and in some cases ends them. If there is one brave soul out there who could give a thoroughbred like Roy Jones fits, I am convinced that it is Trinidad.

STEVE PRICE
Laurel, MD

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

Felix Trinidad threw punches with such force against Fernando Vargas, reader Steve Price wonders what "Tito" has hidden in his gloves. Price writes he's never seen a fighter change the whole complexion of a fight with one punch like WBA/IBF junior middleweight champion Trinidad.

I hope the American media is finished trying to discredit Felix "Tito" Trinidad. After his devastating knockout of previously undefeated Fernando Vargas, Trinidad should have silenced any remaining critics.

They questioned Tito's chin. He walked through punches thrown by Oscar De La Hoya, David Reid, and Vargas. They said he starts slow, yet his last two fights he came out smoking. Trinidad showed the world once again that he is the greatest pure fighter of the last 20 years. Not since a prime Roberto Duran has the world seen such a fierce fighting machine.

Trinidad is the number-one pound-for-pound fighter in the world. Beware Shane Mosley: Run or get knocked out!

BRIAN McCARRAHER
Citrus Heights, CA

DON'T KNOCK BOXING

It seems to me that most news that one hears about boxing is negative. Two big complaints I hear most are the soaring pay-per-view prices and the problem of mismatched fights. I suggest having a different perspective. First, compared to the other four major sports in this country, boxing prices for pay-per-view are Mickey Mouse. Prices for attending pro sports events are ridiculous, and those are for regular-season, non-championship, meaningless, middle-of-the-road games. Millions of people literally pay thousands of dollars for season tickets to see their favorite last-place team lose another game!

This is acceptable as the American way. But paying $40 to see two unbeaten champions is considered unacceptable? Hey, win, lose, or draw, boring or exciting, it's still an original event that can never be duplicated. Hey, who did the Yankees play in their 21st game of the regular season in 1952? How many times have the Cowboys played the Redskins? Pay-per-view boxing delivers originality every time out.

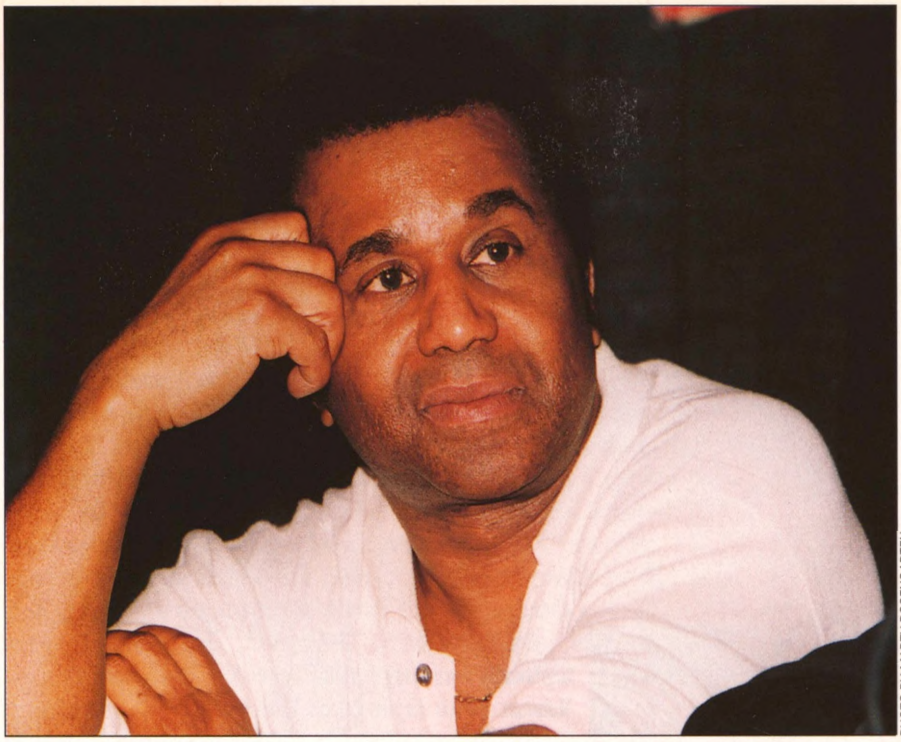


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Former pro middleweight and regular RING reader Ted Mann is a big Emanuel Steward fan and thinks HBO would be wise to keep the Hall of Fame trainer working as a color commentator on a regular basis.

Mismatches are always a complaint by the narrowminded as well. In fact, the late Howard Cosell quit broadcasting boxing matches because of the infamous Larry Holmes-Tex Cobb mismatch. The fact the critics fail to see is that mismatches occur in huge numbers in every single sport you can think of. I don't know how many one-sided Super Bowls I had to suffer through, and I don't know how many regular-season games I viewed for the sole purpose of using them as an effective sleeping aid!

MIKE VALESE
Nutley, NJ

A GAMEZ GUY

I want to congratulate THE RING for its selection of Leo Gamez as Fighter of the Month in your March 2001 issue. Sure, Gamez had numerous opportunities to win titles (eight different times, to be precise). While his wins to capture the WBA minimumweight, junior flyweight, and flyweight belts may fall short of being Hall of Fame achievements, it does not take away from the excellent performance he gave in upsetting Hideki Todaka for the WBA super flyweight title.

Todaka was a strong super flyweight who had kayo power and a rock-hard chin that was tested sternly in fights with hard-punching Akihiko Nago and former champion Yokthai Sithoar, both of whom he defeated, the latter in spectacular fashion.

To hear that the 37-year-old Gamez, who began his career as a strawweight, had dominated and knocked out a strong, proven champ at super flyweight truly shocked me. It was the best win of his career and the best win of the month without question. This only goes to show what dedication and good hard work can do for you in this sport. Both are qualities that Leo Gamez has shown a mountain of throughout his entire career. Being Venezuelan didn't hurt either.

RYAN CARTER
Colorado Springs, CO

EMANUEL, TAKE A BOW

I must congratulate HBO for presenting some top-notch fights as well as some excellent blow-by-blow analysts. Bernard Hopkins-Antwun Echols II was a classic example. It brought back memories of sitting in my grandfather's house in the '50s and '60s, all excited about the fights on Friday night, with Don Dunphy commentating. Sadly, I'll bet there were only a few people in the audience that could understand what Emanuel Steward was talking about, when he spoke of the right-hand counters Hopkins continually threw.

The guiding lights of the network would be wise to keep Steward on the tube on a permanent basis, as well as a few other quite knowledgeable fight guys out there. They could probably teach a few of the finer points of the game, while explaining what's going on in the ring. Let me tell you, Steward was very impressive!

TED MANN
Bayville, NJ

OSCAR'S OPTIONS

Oscar De La Hoya wants a rematch with Shane Mosley in 2001, but Mosley would likely beat "The Golden Boy" again because he seems to have more endurance than De La Hoya. De La Hoya has a better chance of winning a rematch with Felix Trinidad at super welterweight.

LAURENCE MURDOCH
Santa Ana, CA ■

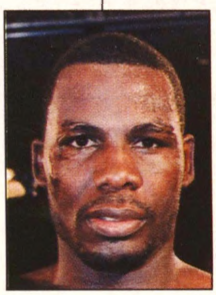
LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

RAHMAN: "I'M GOING TO KNOCK LENNOX OUT!"

Not since **Evander Holyfield's** first fight with **Mike Tyson** has a challenger in a heavyweight title fight been this big an underdog and still been this confident. With Holyfield, of course, it was a quiet confidence. With **Hasim Rahman**, who challenges **Lennox Lewis** for the heavyweight crown on HBO on April 21, it's not the least bit quiet. Rahman is more fired up than he's ever been, and when Las Vegas oddsmaker **Herb Lambeck** listed Lewis as a 20-1 favorite shortly after the fight was announced, it practically turned "The Rock" into a young **Cassius Clay**.

"I love it!" Rahman yelled about the odds. "I love it! People are gonna get rich off me! I never really was serious for any fight before this one, but people are going to see a whole new fighter against Lennox, and I'm gonna shock the world! They're giving me no chance, and that's ridiculous. But they'll see, on April 21, I'm going to knock Lennox out!"



Rahman: 20-1 underdog?

Could it happen? On the one hand, Lewis has looked dominant of late, blowing out **Michael Grant** and systematically destroying **David Tua**, both of whom were perceived by the public as more dangerous fighters than Rahman. But on the other hand, Rahman is a heavy puncher and is nearly as physically imposing as Lewis, plus he believes his own performance against Tua, which he lost by controversial stoppage, was more impressive than Lewis'.

"I clearly beat a much better Tua than he beat," Rahman said, having convinced himself long ago that, regardless of what the record books say, he defeated the Samoan. "Tua was a fat slob when he fought Lennox. The Tua that I fought would have knocked out the Tua that Lennox fought. He just fought for the money. He embarrassed himself. To make me a 20-1 underdog and him 3-1 is absurd. But it's poetic justice, because I should have been the mandatory challenger then, but instead I'm going to knock Lennox out now.

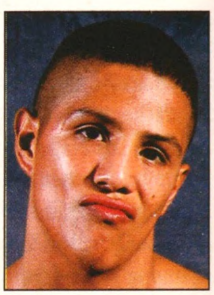
"I'm ready for war. This is *the* fight for me, and I'm willing to give up everything. I'm not boxing him, I'm fighting him, from the first round until the last. When Lennox fights, I just see people allowing him to do what he wants to do. We all know Lennox can box. But I plan on making him *fight*."

Whether you believe Rahman has a chance or not, there's no question that *he* believes it. And the opinion here is that he sure as heck isn't a 20-1 underdog, even if I'm not quite bold enough to be that guy who picks The Rock to win. But I do know that, although members of the press are supposed to be unbiased, I'll be silently rooting for him because, as he points out, he's not just fighting for himself.

"I'm bringing that title back to the U.S.A., where it belongs," Rahman said. "When the fight was signed, people were coming up to me, congratulating me on getting the title shot. But I told them, 'Don't congratulate me now. I haven't done nothing yet. Congratulate me after I win the title.'"

MIDDLEWEIGHT MADNESS

If you hold out long enough, sometimes you get what you want. That appears to finally be the case for IBF middleweight champion **Bernard Hopkins**, who recently inked a six-fight deal with **Don King** and will kick off what amounts to a middleweight title tournament on April 14 by unifying with WBC titlist **Keith Holmes**. A month later, WBA champ **William Joppy** defends against the awesome **Felix Trinidad**, and if the prefight favorites prevail, we should see Hopkins-Trinidad for middleweight supremacy sometime in the fall. And the reward for whoever emerges as king at 160 pounds rates to be a megafight with **Roy Jones** at a catchweight of 168 or 170 pounds. If this all plays out, never again will we have a right to complain that the big fights don't get made.

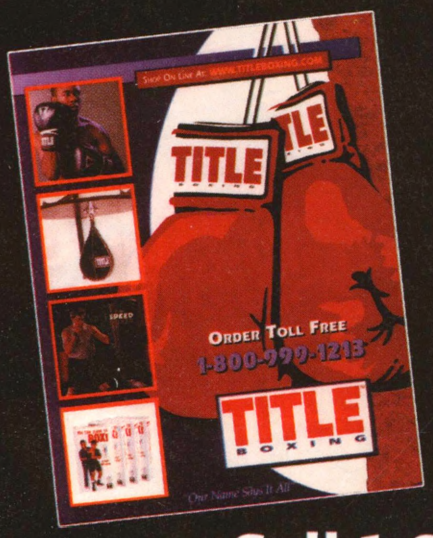


Vargas: Back on B.A.D.

LISTEN UP

Fernando Vargas is scheduled to make his return on an HBO *Boxing After Dark* show on April 28. The opponent had not yet been determined as of press time ... Showtime boss **Jay Larkin** has said he's setting aside a July 14 date for undefeated junior lightweights **Joel Casamayor** and **Acelino Freitas** to collide. Both are expected to fight once more between now and then ... May 19 is the likely date and Madison Square Garden is the likely site for the highly anticipated junior welterweight unification showdown between **Kostya Tszyu** and **Zab Judah**. ■

NO POLITICS. JUST BOXING.



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